

A Kay Tracey Mystery

IN THE SUNKEN GARDEN

Kay puts on dancing slippers to solve a mystery

FRANCES K. JUDD



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Kay's position was precarious

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Frances K. Judd



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IN THE SUNKEN GARDEN

CHAPTER I

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

“Now let me see. Have I everything Mother told me to bring home?”

Kay Tracey, a slender school girl with brown eyes set in an attractive face, spoke the words aloud as she thoughtfully studied her shopping list. As her mother was planning to give a luncheon to a small group of friends that Saturday afternoon, the girl had driven to Carmont at an early hour to do the necessary buying.

“No, I knew I had forgotten something!” she exclaimed, checking the list. “Place cards and flowers.”

Directly across the street Kay noticed a florist’s shop which had an attractive display in the window. After locking the car she went over to look at it, and then entered the store.

“Good morning,” she said to the man in charge. “I should like some flowers that will carry out a pink and white color scheme.”

“Our roses are beautiful,” he suggested. “They came only ten minutes ago from the greenhouse. Let me show them to you.”

Quickly he went to a rear room where many of the flowers were kept. Scarcely had he disappeared when the shop door opened and a tall young man in a gray suit came hurrying into the building. He glanced toward Kay, halted abruptly, and doffed his hat.

“Well, hello,” he greeted her jovially. “I certainly didn’t expect to see you up so bright and early! Grand party last night, wasn’t it?”

Kay was taken completely by surprise, for to her knowledge she had never seen the man before. Nor had she attended a party the previous evening. She had remained at home in nearby Brantwood with her mother and Cousin Bill Tracey, a young lawyer who had lived with the Traceys since the death of Kay’s father.

Before she could say that she thought the man must have mistaken her for another person, he glanced impatiently about the shop.

“The proprietor isn’t around? Well, I can’t wait. I’m in a big hurry. See you again soon.”

Waving to Kay, he went out the door and started across the street. Before he had vanished, the florist returned with a large bouquet of pink and white roses.

“Didn’t I hear someone enter the shop?” the proprietor asked Kay.

“Yes, it was that man who is crossing the street now.” Moving to the plate glass window, she indicated the stranger.

“Do you know him?”

The florist shook his head. “He isn’t one of my regular customers. I don’t recall ever having seen him before.”

“It was peculiar,” Kay remarked, half to herself. “The young man evidently mistook me for a person he knew well. I didn’t suppose anyone in the world looked like me, certainly not in Brantwood!”

She turned her attention to the roses, finally bought a dozen and a half, and left the shop.

“Now I’ll get the place cards and then my shopping will be finished,” she thought as she carried the box to the car.

As the nearest store where cards and favors could be bought was two blocks away, Kay decided it would be quicker to drive there than to walk. At the first corner the auto was held up by a red traffic light. While waiting for it to change, she noticed two girls on the sidewalk. They were dressed in the latest fashion, somewhat conspicuously. Catching a glimpse of Kay, they began to wave and call to her.

“Say, where did you borrow that good-looking car?” cried one gaily. “Give us a lift!”

Kay glanced over her shoulder, half expecting to see that another automobile had drawn up behind her own. Her car was the only one for some distance down the street. Obviously the two girls were calling to her, under the impression that they were acquaintances.

“I never saw either of them before in my life,” thought Kay in dismay. “Goodness, this makes the second time in fifteen minutes that I’ve been mistaken for another person!”

The traffic light changed to green so she drove on before the two girls could reach her. A moment later she thought regretfully: “I wish I had waited and asked them the name of my double. Well, the chance is gone now.”

While she shopped for attractive place cards, Kay continued to reflect upon the incident. So deeply absorbed was she that she did not observe a girl named Ethel Eaton enter the shop. The two attended the same high school at Carmont, commuting each day from their homes in Brantwood. Ethel was not a popular student, and although Kay tried to be friendly, she was regarded with jealousy and envy by the Eaton girl.

“Oh, hello, Kay,” Ethel sang out, “what are you doing here?”

“Good morning, Ethel. I’m just buying a few place cards for Mother. She’s giving a little luncheon this afternoon.”

“Really?” Ethel’s tone became bragging. “My mother doesn’t bother about *little luncheons*. I suppose you heard that she is giving a grand dinner party this week for Monsieur and Madame Le Blanc.”

“No, Ethel, I hadn’t heard,” Kay responded dryly.

“Mother will have at least forty guests. Monsieur and Madame Le Blanc are such distinguished persons.”

“I don’t believe their names are familiar to me.”

“Probably not,” Ethel returned, walking away. “They came from abroad recently and we shall be the first to entertain them.”

Kay made her selection of place cards and left the shop, not in the least disturbed by Ethel Eaton’s remarks. As she approached her car she noticed a beautiful shepherd dog sitting at the curb. He sprang up, barking joyously, and tried to get into the automobile as she opened the door.

“No, you can’t come with me,” Kay commanded sternly. “Go back to your owner!”

She drove away slowly. Glancing back, she was disturbed to see that the dog had followed the car. As she drove faster he was hard pressed to keep the automobile within view.

“Poor thing,” she thought. “I wonder if *he* is mistaking me for someone else, too.”

Stopping the car, she again tried to send the dog away. Finally he trotted off down the street. Satisfied that she had seen the last of him, Kay continued toward home, making frequent stops for traffic lights.

Halfway to Brantwood she glanced into the side mirror and was dismayed to see that the friendly animal was once more directly behind her. His tongue was hanging out and he limped as he ran.

“Why, the poor thing is exhausted,” the girl thought, applying the foot brake. “I can’t let this go on.”

When she opened the car door the dog crawled in and licked her hand with his tongue. Lifting him to the seat beside her, she patted his head.

“I’ll take you along home with me,” she decided sympathetically. “I guess you’ll be my pet until I can locate your owner.”

At the Tracey house a few minutes later Kay began to unload packages from the rear of the car. To her astonishment the beautiful dog seized one of the parcels in his teeth and carried it proudly to the front porch. Carefully placing it on the steps he returned for a second package.

“So I have a helper!” laughed Kay, delighted by the trick. “Someone must have trained you well.”

As the animal started across the garden with a box of rolls which he held by the string, another dog, long a neighborhood pest, made a sudden dart at him. The attack was brief but vicious. As the two animals nipped at each other, the carton from the bakery was torn open. Before Kay could prevent it the rolls tumbled out on the ground. Seizing one in his mouth, the attacking dog retreated to his own front porch.

“Oh, dear, all that food ruined,” Kay murmured, picking up the remains from the dirt. “It’s lucky I bought twice as many

as Mother had on her list. She may be able to get along without sending me back to the shop.”

Upon being introduced to the new dog, Mrs. Tracey regarded him dubiously. However, she was so occupied with plans for the coming luncheon that she quickly agreed Kay might keep the pet until the owner could be located.

“It’s queer how he happened to follow me home—just as if he knew me,” Kay remarked thoughtfully.

“Yes,” agreed her mother, “but dogs are the least of my concern right now. I have about a hundred things to do before one o’clock!”

“I’ll take care of fifty of them for you,” Kay laughed as she helped put away the various parcels. “I noticed that the front porch needs sweeping. I’ll start in there.”

While the girl was busy with her task, Ronald Earle, a young man who considered Kay by far the most attractive person in Brantwood, drove by in his car. He stopped to chat for a few minutes, pleading with her to go for a little ride.

“Sorry, I can’t now,” she declined with honest regret. “I’ve promised to help Mother with a luncheon.”

After he had gone, Kay went to the kitchen to assist in preparing a salad. In the midst of cutting up some fruit, she let the sharp knife with which she was working slip. The result was a deep gash on her hand from which blood spurted profusely.

“Oh, dear,” sighed the girl, as she let cold water run over the wound, which would not stop bleeding, “I guess I’ll have to put on a bandage.”

This she did, but it hampered her work so much that things were barely ready when the guests began to arrive for the luncheon.

Kay knew all of them well. Several of her mother’s friends asked about her injured hand. One wanted to know if she had been in an automobile accident! Another blamed it on a possible mishap in connection with the girl’s work as an amateur detective.

“I seem to be involved in another mystery right now,” Kay laughed good-naturedly. “This morning two persons mistook me for another girl. And even a stray dog adopted me as his owner. I am sure I must have a double, although I haven’t seen her yet.”

After luncheon Kay decided to take her newly acquired pet for a walk along the river. Both enjoyed it and Kay became more fond of the animal every moment. He was not only lovable, but very intelligent. “I’ll hate to let you go,” she said, patting him affectionately.

Although she was gone over two hours, she met no one. Returning home late in the afternoon, she was about to enter the house, when Ronald’s car again stopped at the curb.

“Say, you’re a good one!” he shouted with pretended anger.

“What have I done now?” asked Kay, turning and walking toward the car.

“Didn’t you tell me you had to help your mother with a luncheon?”

“Yes, I did, Ronald. But while the women were busy afterward I slipped out for a little walk with my new dog.”

“You’re sure you *walked*?”

“Of course! Why that suspicious gleam in your eye?”

“Oh, I’m not suspicious. But I was certain I saw you riding with a young man about ten minutes ago. He had a maroon automobile.”

“I don’t know any young men who own maroon cars, Ronald. You were mistaken.”

“Guess I must have been,” the young man returned in evident relief.

“Two other persons besides yourself have mistaken me for someone else today, Ronald. Tell me, what did this other girl look like?”

“Why, just like you, Kay, only now that I think of it, she was wearing a blue dress and yours is white. She might have been a year or two older.”

“I wish I could see her, Ronald. It’s vastly interesting—this business of being a twin!”

Later Kay did not regard the matter so lightly, for she was to learn that mistaken identity could in most cases cause no end of difficulty. However, Ronald readily believed her when she assured him she had not been driving with another young man. After he had gone, she again joined her mother's friends.

The afternoon drew pleasantly to a close. Nearly all the guests had left the house when Bill Tracey's automobile rolled up the driveway. The young lawyer ran across the lawn, came up the front porch steps two at a time and burst into the living room.

"I am sorry to break up the party this way," he apologized, "but I have dreadful news!" Observing Kay who stood across the room, he halted abruptly. "Why, it's you!" he said.

"Of course," she replied in astonishment. "Did you think I might be some other girl?"

Bill Tracey was in no mood for joking. Rushing across the room, he clasped his cousin in his arms.

"Kay, you're really safe!" he exclaimed in an unsteady voice. "Thank goodness, it wasn't you after all!"

CHAPTER II

COMPLICATIONS

“Bill, you didn’t think Kay had been injured?” cried Mrs. Tracey before her daughter could speak.

“Yes, I did,” the young lawyer returned gravely. “Doctor Brown telephoned to me from the hospital about ten minutes ago. He had just treated an unconscious girl who was injured in an automobile accident.”

“And he thought she was Kay?” asked the girl’s mother.

“He seemed to have no doubt of it. That was what gave me such a surprise when I saw my cousin here. I came home to get you before driving on to the hospital.”

“Doctor Brown knows me fairly well,” Kay remarked slowly. “If he were deceived, then this other girl must be practically a walking picture of me.”

“Kay believes she has a mysterious double,” explained Mrs. Tracey. “Several times today she was mistaken for someone else.”

“I wish I could see her for myself,” declared her daughter.

It was evident that the incident had left Bill Tracey in a somewhat shattered state of mind. Offering an apology to the few remaining guests, he went hastily to his room.

Presently all the guests left the house except a Mrs. Graham who was waiting for a taxi. When the cab did not come, Kay offered to take the woman home in her car.

“Oh, I shouldn’t think of troubling you,” Mrs. Graham protested.

“I really should like to do it,” replied Kay eagerly.

As the woman lived only two blocks from the hospital, it occurred to the girl that she could visit her mysterious double while on the errand. Telling her mother that she might be a little late in returning, Kay took the guest home, then stopped at the institution.

She was doomed to disappointment, for she was told that the patient who bore such a remarkable resemblance to herself had been discharged. After regaining consciousness and submitting to first aid treatment for a sprained ankle the girl had refused to remain longer, disregarding the advice of doctors.

“Can you tell me her name?” inquired Kay thoughtfully.

The young woman in charge of the desk glanced through a card index file.

“Yes, her name is Jane Barton.”

“And her address?”

“1500 Sunset Drive.”

“Thank you very much,” Kay responded mechanically as she turned away.

It was disappointing to have missed meeting the patient, and she wondered if it would be worth her while to seek the girl at the Sunset Drive address. At the moment she had no thought that she and her double were to play important roles in an absorbing adventure soon to unfold.

Mystery was the breath of life to the alert, attractive Kay Tracey. Aided by the loyal Worth twins, Betty and Wilma, the sixteen-year-old girl had solved many cases in and around her home town. As a result, Kay had established herself as an amateur detective of wide reputation, and many people came to her for advice.

But now, Kay mused, tucking in a curly stray wisp of her chestnut brown hair, she had bumped straight into a new kind of mystery. Never before had she been mistaken for anybody else. True, it had seemed amusing at first, but now Kay felt she must untangle the skein quickly.

“I’ll just telephone Jane Barton’s home and inquire if the girl is getting along all right,” she told herself now as she returned to her car.

Although she searched carefully through the B’s in the directory, Kay could not find a family by the name of Barton

listed as living on Sunset Drive.

“That’s strange,” she mused as she went back to the automobile. “I wonder if the girl could be living with a family of a different name? I am sure I have the address right —1500 Sunset Drive.”

Now that Kay’s interest had been stimulated she made up her mind that she would drive out to the house at the first opportunity. It was too late to make the trip this afternoon, for no doubt dinner would be waiting by the time she could reach home. Turning into the Tracey driveway a few minutes later, she was met at the side door by her mother.

“A man who calls himself Joe Craken is in the living room waiting for you, Kay. He won’t tell me why he wishes to see you, but from his general attitude I think he means to make trouble.”

“Craken—I don’t know anyone by that name.”

“He is a very coarse looking fellow. Bill went back to his office. Later his secretary phoned he had to go out of town. I feel rather uneasy.”

“I’ll see what he wants, Mother. That will be the quickest way to get rid of him.”

As Kay entered the living room, a short, stout man with a disfiguring scar on his right cheek arose from the davenport. His eyes were sharply appraising.

“I’ll be brief and to the point, Miss Tracey. You owe me the price of a new car and something extra for personal injuries.”

“I owe *you!*” exclaimed Kay incredulously. “Why, I don’t even know who you are!”

“Now don’t pull that stuff. It won’t get you anywhere. You thought I didn’t know who you were but the police learned your name.”

“Perhaps you have mistaken me for another person.”

“You’re Kay Tracey, aren’t you?”

“Yes.”

“Well, that was the name the police gave me. You’re the one I’m after.”

“Why do you claim I owe you so much money?”

“Listen!” the man said unpleasantly. “It won’t get you any place pretending not to know anything about the accident. You smashed my car and injured one of my passengers.”

“Your claim is preposterous!” interposed Mrs. Tracey before Kay could reply. “My daughter has not been in an automobile accident.”

“She probably didn’t tell you about it, Ma’am,” retorted Mr. Craken bluntly. “Look at her hand all bandaged up. And I found out the car she was driving belonged to a man who is in Europe. So she must have helped herself to it.”

“You have mistaken me for another girl,” Kay said coldly, “and apparently the police have too.”

“So you’re trying to make me believe that some other girl looks just like you?”

“It happens to be the truth, Mr. Craken. I learned today that evidently I have a double.”

“Are you giving me a straight story?”

“My daughter is not in the habit of telling untruths,” said Mrs. Tracey indignantly.

“No offense meant,” the man returned quickly. “If I made a mistake it’s because the police gave me the wrong name. Who is this other girl?”

Annoyed by the visitor’s rudeness, Kay made up her mind that she would not disclose the identity of her “twin” until she had made some investigation of the case. She did promise Mr. Craken that if she should meet the girl she would try to find out something for him. With this assurance the man was forced to depart.

While Kay was telling her mother what she had learned at the hospital, Wilma and Betty Worth stopped at the house on their way home from the theatre. They too learned the entire story.

“Well, if that isn’t funny!” cried Betty, the blue-eyed sister. “Here Wilma and I really are twins, yet we don’t look the least bit alike.”

“And Kay has a double who isn’t even a relative!” added Wilma, laughing.

In appearance as well as in character these sisters presented a marked contrast. Wilma was tall and dark, very studious, and inclined to be serious. Each week she spent many hours reading and composing poetry, and upon one occasion had won a prize for her work.

“I should like to see my ‘twin,’” Kay told her friends. “Isn’t Sunset Drive located in the western section of the city?”

“Yes, but the street is a long one,” replied Betty, who was familiar with the outlying district. “It extends far into the country—six or seven miles at least.”

“Oh, yes, I remember the street now,” nodded Kay. “Aren’t there a number of old estates out that way?”

“Yes, and several real estate developments. It is the oldest part of Brantwood, you know, and at one time was considered very exclusive.”

“Perhaps I can induce Ronald to drive me out that way tonight,” Kay remarked as her friends arose to leave.

“He invited me to a dance at the Milton Country Club.”

“I guess Ronald will do just about anything you suggest,” Betty said teasingly. “Well, if you run into another mystery, don’t forget to count Wilma and me in on it!”

Shortly after eight o’clock young Earle arrived at the Tracey home. He assured Kay that the Sunset Drive route would not

be in the least out of their way in going toward Milton.

“Do you know anyone living on that street?” he inquired curiously.

“No,” laughed Kay as he helped her into the car, “but I hope soon to make the acquaintance of my mysterious double. I’ve learned that she lives at 1500 Sunset Drive. Where do you think that would be?”

“Oh, a long distance out. Probably about six miles.”

As the car sped along the wide, curving driveway, Kay studied the dark old mansions with interest. Many had been abandoned, some were being used as offices and clubhouses, while others had been torn down to make way for modern dwellings.

“I wonder if any of the original families still live on Sunset Drive?” Kay mused, turning her head to gaze back at a particularly elegant old dwelling.

“I guess there are a few families left, but not many. Did you notice the house we just passed?”

“Yes, it was unusually interesting, I thought.”

“That was the old Huntley place, Kay. No one has lived there for many years.”

“I saw a light in the front window,” Kay said quickly.

“You did? Then a family must have moved in very recently. The place has been difficult to rent on account of the mystery connected with it.”

“Mystery?” Kay inquired alertly.

“Perhaps that isn’t the right word to use. I guess I never told you about the Huntleys being distantly related to my family.”

“Why no, Ronald, I never heard you speak of them before.”

“The truth is, we’re not very proud of the relationship,” the young man admitted reluctantly. “You see, one of the Huntleys absconded with money and has never been traced. At least that is the story. The house has stood vacant ever since.”

Kay longed to ask Ronald additional questions about the Huntleys. Sensing his unwillingness to discuss the subject, she tactfully changed the topic of conversation.

At the Milton Country Club the couple spent an enjoyable evening to tunes played by an excellent band. During an intermission the guests were entertained by a special dance number presented by a talented young woman. Although Kay and Ronald did not hear her name, they understood the announcer to say that the dancer would appear in only one local performance as she had been signed for a show to open in New York City very shortly.

At the conclusion of the last encore, which won rounds of applause, the young woman turned directly toward

Kay. She bowed and smiled, then ran gracefully from the floor.

“Do you know her?” questioned Ronald in surprise.

Kay shook her head. “I never saw her before in my life.”

“She certainly acted as if she were acquainted with you.”

“Perhaps she is a friend of my double,” Kay laughed. The next instant her face became sober. “Do you mind waiting here for a minute, Ronald? I believe I’ll go into the dressing room and chat with that girl. I am curious to learn if she knows me or only thinks she does.”

By the time Kay reached the dressing room she discovered that the dancer no longer was there. An attendant explained that the young woman had slipped a cloak over her costume and had driven away in an automobile.

Disappointed, Kay rejoined Ronald and in a short while they started back to Brantwood. As they rolled smoothly along Sunset Drive with the car windows open, they noticed that nearly all the old mansions were in darkness.

“I may have been mistaken about the Huntley place being lighted,” Kay said reflectively, “but I don’t think so.”

Presently they drew near the old estate and Ronald idled the car. “The place looks deserted now,” he remarked, staring toward the house. “No sign of a——”

As he spoke, a shrill scream broke the stillness of the night. Ronald and Kay gazed at each other with startled eyes. Unmistakably the cry had come from the grounds of the Huntley estate!

CHAPTER III

A CRY IN THE NIGHT

Parking the car at the side of the road, Ronald and Kay ran toward the dark house which was set far back among tall trees. When they reached the front porch they stood still for a moment to listen.

“I don’t hear anything now,” declared the girl, “but the scream certainly came from this house.”

“Yes, it did,” agreed Ronald, turning the beam of his flashlight on the lower windows. “It sounded like someone being hurt.”

“We might knock on the door,” Kay suggested uncertainly.

Before Ronald could reply, an upstairs window was flung high. A man, whose face could not be seen clearly from below, peered down at them.

“What ees going on?” he demanded suspiciously. “Why do you come here?”

“While we were driving past we heard someone scream,” explained Ronald. “We thought the cry came from this house.”

“No one make noise here until you come prowling around! My wife and I are trying to sleep. Go now or I call ze police.”

“We are only trying to be helpful,” Kay protested quickly.

“You hear me?” shouted the man wrathfully. “Go away or I telephone ze police!”

Decidedly crestfallen, Kay and Ronald retreated to the automobile and drove to Brantwood. Certain they had not been mistaken in thinking they had heard a cry, they concluded that the unpleasant foreign man might have been quarreling with his wife.

The following afternoon, accompanied by the Worth twins, Kay again visited the Sunset Drive district. For several blocks the numbers ran evenly on the houses, then presently the girls discovered that many old mansions bore no address. Although they made inquiry at several places they were unable to locate a house listed as number 1500. From a woman who lived near the Huntley estate the girls did learn that a man and his wife by the name of Le Blanc had taken up residence there during the past week.

“Le Blanc,” the girl said to her chums. “Ethel Eaton told me her parents plan to entertain a Monsieur and Madame Le Blanc. I wonder if they are the same people?”

“It would be just like Ethel’s mother to take up with strangers if she thought they had either position or money,” remarked

Betty. "Mrs. Eaton is a social climber."

"Despite her wealth she never succeeded in climbing very far!" laughed Wilma. "I know our parents are relieved that Mrs. Eaton didn't invite them to her so-called grand dinner."

After bidding good-bye to her friends, Kay drove home. Chancing to pass Doctor Brown's office, she decided upon an impulse to stop for a little chat.

"Now let me look closely at you, young lady," the man laughed jovially. "Is this Kay Tracey or Jane Barton?"

"Are we really so much alike, Doctor?"

"Yes, your resemblance to Jane Barton is astounding. Yesterday I was fooled completely."

"Are you certain you know who I am now?" Kay asked with a twinkle.

"As long as Jane Barton has a bandaged foot I'll have no trouble in identifying you," replied the doctor. "By the way, she was here only a few minutes ago."

"Really? How is she getting along now?"

"Oh, as well as can be expected, but she is impatient. She didn't like it when I told her she shouldn't use her foot for several days. That girl has a will of her own and a temper!"

"I wish I could have met her," Kay remarked regretfully.

“The next time she comes in to have her foot dressed I’ll send word to you,” offered the doctor. “I should enjoy seeing you two together. I’ve never seen twins who look more alike.”

Kay had very little opportunity to think about Jane Barton the following day for as usual school activities took up her time. With Betty, Wilma and other members of a newly organized dance club, she remained late at the building to practice new steps taught by Miss Grover, the gymnasium instructor. Ethel Eaton, although she had never been invited to join the Carmont High School organization, lingered to watch the girls go through a hard drill.

“Aren’t you afraid you’ll trip and fall?” she asked Kay disdainfully. “My, but you swing your feet around awkwardly!”

Kay refused to become annoyed and did not even reply.

“I’d never waste time studying dancing under an inferior teacher,” Ethel went on scornfully. “My parents are going to have me take lessons from a wonderful person.”

Her words might have carried more sting had not Kay and her friends known that Miss Grover was perhaps the best teacher of dancing in the city of Carmont. They thrilled with pleasure when she praised the club for the progress it had made.

“Kay has done especially well,” the teacher declared proudly, “and for that reason I shall make her the leader of our various

routines.”

She announced that the group would give a specialty number in connection with a benefit show to be held soon for the Children’s Home. The news proved highly irritating to Ethel, who with a toss of her head picked up her school books and left the gymnasium.

Kay and the twins took showers and changed into street clothes. They then hastened to the railroad station to catch their train home. Not until the girls were in the coach did Kay notice that she was carrying an extra textbook.

“Why, this isn’t my history!” she exclaimed in surprise. “I wonder where I picked it up?”

Glancing at the fly-leaf she read Ethel Eaton’s name, and groaned.

“I would have to carry away *her* book! Now she’ll probably say that I kept it on purpose.”

“Give it to her in the morning,” suggested Betty carelessly.

“She probably intended to study this evening,” Kay replied, shaking her head. “No, I’ll have to take it to her house tonight, even if it is annoying.”

The Traceys usually dined at six o’clock. Directly after dinner Kay carried the textbook to Ethel’s home. Not until she was at the door did it occur to her that this evening was the one which had been set for Mrs. Eaton’s so-called “grand party.”

“I’ve probably arrived at an awkward hour,” the Tracey girl told herself, “but I needn’t go inside.”

When the door was opened by a butler she gave him the book, explaining how the mix-up had occurred.

“I will tell Miss Ethel you are here,” the servant said politely.

“No, please don’t bother,” Kay protested, but the butler had turned away leaving the door half open.

From within the house could be heard the sound of laughter and music. Evidently many of the guests had arrived. As Kay waited uncomfortably, a man in evening clothes, his reddish hair combed in wisps over a bald head, appeared in the hallway.

He halted abruptly as he saw Kay, staring hard at her. With a quick glance about the halls to make certain that no other person was near, he moved straight toward the door.

“You are to return immediately to ze house, Mademoiselle,” he ordered sharply. “You were not invited to ze dinner. No! Go quickly, please!”

For an instant Kay could not identify the man. Then she recognized his voice. Only the previous evening he had ordered her away from the Huntley mansion, and now he arrogantly was telling her to leave the Eaton premises! Unquestionably he must be Monsieur Le Blanc, the guest of honor whom the Eatons believed so distinguished.

“You hear me?” the man demanded. “Go quickly. *Oui!*”

“Oh, I don’t wish to intrude,” Kay responded, more amused than annoyed.

Without waiting for the butler to return, she walked swiftly away. Before she had gone far she regretted that she had not lingered to talk a few minutes longer with the eccentric stranger.

“Now that I think of it, I wonder why he spoke to me so abruptly?” she mused. “He acted as if we were well known to each other and that it was his right to give me orders.”

The thought came suddenly to Kay that Monsieur Le Blanc might have mistaken her for Jane Barton. In that event it was very likely that the man knew where her double lived. It was even possible that the girl resided in his own household!

“This affair of having a twin becomes more interesting every minute,” she told herself gaily. “I really must locate Jane Barton and have a talk with her.”

Upon reaching home Kay looked in the evening newspaper. She had inserted an advertisement in the lost and found column, calling attention to the shepherd dog which had followed her home. She wished to see if the item appeared correctly.

“I almost hope nobody answers,” she thought, reading over the advertisement. “If no one claims him he’ll be my dog and I’ll call him Jerry.”

The next morning Kay was at home when the postman arrived with several pieces of mail.

“A registered letter for you, Miss Tracey,” he said, offering her a paper to sign.

“I suppose it’s an answer to that advertisement about Jerry,” Kay thought, glancing at the long envelope which the postman placed in her hand.

To her surprise she saw that it bore the name of a law firm, Duster and Trout at Ottenville. Wondering what it might be, Kay ripped open the envelope. One glance at the typewritten letter told her that she faced serious trouble.

In concise legal terminology the firm of Duster and Trout informed her that representing their client, Joe Craken, they were instituting a suit against her. She was accused of wrecking Mr. Craken’s car while herself driving a stolen automobile. Further she would have to pay for injuries to a passenger in the Craken party. The letter ended by saying that witnesses were available who would swear in court to all of the facts as stated.

“This is an outrage!” Kay exclaimed, hurrying into the house. “A deliberate frame-up!”

“Why, what is wrong?” inquired Mrs. Tracey as she saw her daughter’s face.

“Just read this letter, Mother.”

Mrs. Tracey quickly scanned the communication. “Oh, dear, this is serious,” she declared anxiously.

“It might be serious,” Kay amended in a grim voice, “but fortunately Cousin Bill will know how to prove that I had nothing to do with the auto accident. I’ll just turn this over to him.”

Mrs. Tracey’s look of anxiety deepened. “Bill is out of town,” she said despairingly. “He left unexpectedly Saturday evening. He didn’t tell anyone where to reach him. What are we to do now?”

CHAPTER IV

AN ABANDONED GARDEN

“Cousin Bill’s absence does complicate matters,” Kay agreed. “But then, the case can’t reach court for some little while.”

“We should have ample time to prepare a defense,” agreed her mother. “It is foolish to worry. Bill will return within a day or two, and when he comes he’ll straighten out everything.”

Kay folded the letter and placed it in the desk drawer. “I’ll forget about the matter for the time being, Mother. Now I must hurry or I’ll be late for school.”

Gathering up her books, the girl ran nearly all the way to the railroad station. She arrived just as the train was about to pull out and swung aboard the last car. She was breathless as she sank into a seat opposite the Worth twins.

“One of these mornings you’ll sleep a minute too long,” declared Wilma with an amused laugh.

Kay explained why she had been late, requesting the twins not to tell anyone about the letter which she had received.

“You’ve probably been mistaken for that double of yours again!” exclaimed Betty.

“I don’t know what to think. I believed I had convinced Mr. Craken that I had nothing to do with the accident. Apparently after leaving me he went directly to this Ottenville law firm. At first he didn’t say I was responsible for injury to a passenger.”

“It looks to me as if the lawyers are trying to build up a big case out of nothing,” declared Wilma indignantly.

Kay nodded her head. “I’ve nearly reached the same conclusion. Cousin Bill will get me out of it somehow, but I feel sorry for Jane Barton.”

“For all we know, the accident may have been Mr. Craken’s fault,” added Betty.

“I wish I could talk with the girl,” Kay said thoughtfully. “I’ve been wondering if perhaps she doesn’t live at the old Huntley house with Monsieur Le Blanc and his wife.”

“With whom?” demanded Betty, sitting up very straight.

“Monsieur Le Blanc. I learned last night that he and his wife have rented the Huntley place. Incidentally, when I called at the Eaton house to take back Ethel’s book the man very arrogantly ordered me away!”

Wilma and Betty listened eagerly to Kay’s account of the incident, and then reported that according to neighborhood gossip the Eaton party had been a dismal failure. Monsieur

Le Blanc and his wife had boasted outrageously of their ability as dancing instructors, and had bored all the guests.

“So Monsieur Le Blanc is a dancing teacher,” Kay remarked, smiling broadly. “From the way Ethel acted I imagined that he must have descended from royalty at least.”

“Sh!” warned Wilma in an undertone. “Here she comes now.”

Slowly Ethel walked down the aisle, pausing as she reached the section occupied by Kay and the twins.

“Oh, thanks for bringing over the book last evening, Kay. My, but I’m tired this morning,” she said with a yawn. “I didn’t get to bed until after one o’clock. What a party! Monsieur Le Blanc is such a fascinating person!”

Hoping to draw a little information from the girl, Kay remarked that she had heard the Le Blancs had rented the old Huntley house. “I am surprised they need such a large place just for themselves,” she mentioned pointedly. “There are only the two of them, aren’t there?”

“Why don’t you ask Monsieur Le Blanc?” Ethel replied with a mysterious air. “I am sure he wouldn’t care to have me discuss his affairs.”

Feeling that she had scored against her rival, the girl walked on down the aisle.

“I can guess why the Le Blancs rented the Huntley house,” Kay told the twins. “They probably intend to use it for a

dance studio.”

“Why do you believe Jane Barton may be living with them?” Betty asked curiously.

“Because of the way Monsieur Le Blanc ordered me from the Eaton house last night.”

“You think he mistook you for Jane Barton?”

“I do, Betty. After school tonight let’s go out there and see what we can learn.”

“We’d love to do it,” declared Wilma eagerly, “but don’t you think the man might remember you?”

“Maybe I could disguise myself,” replied Kay. “I’ll borrow some of Mother’s clothes and make up my face to look much older.”

Five o’clock found the girls standing on the front porch of the old Huntley house. Kay wore a large hat which came far down over her forehead, but even so Wilma and Betty were afraid she might be identified.

“What will you say to Monsieur Le Blanc?” Wilma whispered nervously.

“I’ll be guided by the way he acts,” returned Kay, pressing the doorbell.

A moment later not the dancing master but his wife came to the door. She was a tall, thin woman with dark hair and eyes.

Ten years before she might have been beautiful, but now hard lines marred her mouth, and her eyes were cold and unfriendly.

“Monsieur Le Blanc is very busy now,” she said, speaking with an accent. “There will be no more try-outs today.”

“Oh, our call is purely a social one—” Kay began.

Before she could finish, the man appeared in the doorway. He did not recognize Kay. Scowling with displeasure, he exclaimed:

“Always someone at the door!” Running his hands through his hair with a nervous gesture, he added, “Never have I ze moment of peace in zis *chateau*. All day ze stupid girls annoy me for try-outs, because I am ze great *maitre de danse!*”

“Now, Henri,” protested his wife soothingly, “these young ladies say they did not come here for a try-out.”

Monsieur Le Blanc paid no heed to the woman’s words for at that moment he heard music somewhere in the house.

“There, ze dance begins now!” he cried, turning away. “I must go! Do not bother me with visitors.”

“My husband is temperamental as are all great artists,” Madame Le Blanc said with an apologetic sigh. “You will excuse it, please?”

“Oh, yes, we quite understand,” replied Kay smoothly. “We’ll just come inside and wait until the rehearsals are over.”

“My husband would not like that,” Madame Le Blanc returned, frowning. “The rehearsal will last many hours. I also must be excused for Monsieur expects me to help him.”

Gently but firmly the woman closed the door in the girls’ faces.

“A lot we learned!” Betty said in disappointment.

“What do you suppose is going on in there anyway?” Wilma asked, gazing toward the upstairs windows.

“I intend to find out,” Kay announced grimly. “We’ll get into the house somehow.”

“I’m not in favor of crawling in any windows,” Wilma announced.

“Oh, we’ll find a perfectly proper way to enter,” laughed Kay. “Let’s try the back door. Perhaps a servant will let us in.”

Walking around the house, the girls knocked on both the side and back doors, but no one answered. As they were turning away, Kay called attention to a sunken garden which descended in ledges to the river at the far end of the Huntley estate. A pagoda tea house had fallen into ruin, and the entire place was overgrown with weeds. Shrubbery had not been

clipped. Once attractive statues here and there were discolored and broken.

“At one time this must have been a very lovely garden,” Kay remarked as the girls wandered along one of the paths.

“What a pity it has been neglected.”

After crossing over a small arched bridge, they sat down on a stone bench. Near by on a slightly tilted pedestal stood a crystal ball.

“You might tell our fortunes, Wilma,” Betty said jokingly.

Her twin arose. Walking over to the crystal globe, she gazed into its depth, then quoted in a chanting voice:

“I shall gather myself into myself again,
I shall take my scattered selves and make them one,
I shall fuse them into a crystal ball
Where I can see the moon and the flashing sun.

I shall sit like a sibyl, hour after hour intent,
Watching the future come and the present go—
And the little shifting pictures of people rushing
In tiny self-importance to and fro.”

“Never mind the poetry,” interrupted Betty with a laugh. “Just tell our fortunes. What do you see in the crystal ball?”

“Not a thing except my own unpowdered nose!” Wilma laughed. She straightened up and walked back to the bench. “Shall we go to the car now?”

“You and Betty start on, I’ll join you in a minute,” Kay said quickly.

“Now what do you plan to do, young lady?” demanded Betty. “I’ll venture to say you’ve thought up a way to get into the house!”

“No, I only intend to try the back door again.”

“Then Betty and I may as well wait in the car,” Wilma said, turning away.

After her friends had disappeared around the corner of the house, Kay went once more to the back door. She rapped several times but no one came. Just as she was starting away, the door suddenly was opened by a girl who wore ballet slippers and a dancing costume.

“Do you wish to see someone?”

“Yes, may I speak with Jane Barton, please?” Kay requested boldly.

“Jane Barton?” the girl repeated, shaking her head. “There is no one here by that name.”

“She was injured in an automobile accident.”

“You must have the wrong house.” Hastily the girl closed the door, but not before Kay had observed a look of panic on the young face.

“I believe she knew whom I meant,” Kay told herself as she walked slowly toward the road. “Queer things are going on in that house.”

Wilma and Betty, waiting in the car, gazed at their chum with startled eyes.

“Why Kay, how did you manage to change your clothes so quickly?” Betty asked half accusingly. “And you told us you had no scheme for getting inside the house.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” protested Kay. “These clothes are the ones I’ve worn ever since we came here.”

“But we saw you only a moment ago in a different dress,” insisted Betty. “You were carrying a basket of food from the house. Or could it have been——”

“My double!” finished Kay, her voice tense with excitement. “Tell me quickly, which way did she go?”

CHAPTER V

A PUZZLING PAPER

“We saw the girl walking toward the sunken garden,” said Betty. “She looked exactly like you!”

“We must try to find her!” cried Kay as she started toward the house.

The Worth twins scrambled hastily from the car and followed their chum. When they reached the sunken garden there was no sign of the girl.

“She isn’t here now,” observed Kay in disappointment.

“She was at this very spot only a few moments ago,” insisted Wilma.

“Yes, and there is her basket!” exclaimed Betty, pointing toward the pagoda.

“Then perhaps she’ll be back again in a minute or two,” declared Kay, hastening toward the ruined tea house. “We’ll wait for her.”

The lunch basket had been left on a wooden bench, but no one could be seen in the garden or anywhere on the grounds.

Kay and the twins sat down to wait. Minutes elapsed but the girl did not return. It was rapidly growing dark. Finally Wilma glanced uneasily at her wrist watch.

“It will soon be dinner time, girls. Betty and I should be home in a little while or I am afraid Mother will worry.”

Disappointed, Kay arose from the bench. “I guess it’s useless to wait any longer. We may as well go.”

“It’s certainly queer what became of that girl,” Betty remarked as the three slowly walked back to the car. “Maybe she saw us waiting for her and deliberately stayed away.”

“I was thinking the same thing,” admitted Kay. “Still, she has no good reason for wishing to avoid me—at least not to my knowledge.”

“She would profit by talking with you, if only she knew it,” added Wilma, turning to glance back toward the garden. “Do you suppose the girl makes her home with the Le Blancs, Kay?”

“I suspect that she does, since you and Betty saw her leaving the house with a lunch basket. Oh, I wish I could learn more about those people!”

The matter so plagued Kay that later in the evening she determined upon a bold move. Knowing that Ethel probably would be at the library, she went alone to the Eaton home. She was received politely if not cordially by the girl’s mother. Skillfully Kay directed the conversation,

encouraging the woman to speak of the guests she had entertained recently.

“I really do not know the Le Blancs well at all,” Mrs. Eaton confessed reluctantly.

“I suppose you first heard of them through friends?”

“Well, no, I didn’t. Ethel told me about them. Somehow she learned the man was a famous dancing master in Europe not long ago. I really entertained the couple because Ethel was so eager for me to do it.”

“Perhaps you could tell me if the Le Blancs have a girl living with them?”

“I couldn’t. Madame Le Blanc mentioned that they had taken the old Huntley house, but she didn’t say whether or not they have children.” Mrs. Eaton frowned thoughtfully. “Ethel has been pleading with me to be allowed to take dancing lessons from Monsieur, but I doubt that I shall consent.”

“You are not wholly satisfied that the man is as talented as he says?” asked Kay.

“Oh, undoubtedly he is a famous dancing teacher,” Mrs. Eaton returned quickly. “But he is very strange. And his lessons are expensive.”

“I suppose he will use the old Huntley house for a studio?”

“I neglected to ask,” replied Mrs. Eaton.

The woman became reluctant to answer any more questions, so Kay changed the subject and soon left the house. Approaching her own home a few minutes later, she observed that Cousin Bill's half of the double garage remained empty.

“Not here yet,” she thought uneasily. “I was sure he would drive in tonight.”

Mrs. Tracey was even more disturbed than her daughter over the young lawyer's prolonged absence. Unknown to Kay, she had sent telegrams to various out-of-town hotels where she thought he might be located, but no answer had come.

Kay tried not to worry about the impending law suit. She went to school as usual the following day, but found it increasingly difficult to keep her mind upon her studies.

After classes were dismissed for the afternoon, members of the dancing club gathered in the auditorium to practice for the benefit show. Kay was one of the first to arrive. While waiting for the other girls to change into their costumes, she stood at the window watching the dark clouds which scudded across the sky.

“A bad storm is coming up, I'm afraid,” she remarked to Wilma. “Do you think we should cut practice and hurry to the station?”

“Oh, it probably will be a quick shower,” returned her chum carelessly. “Anyway, I brought my umbrella.”

When Miss Grover entered the auditorium, Kay casually asked the young woman if she were acquainted with Brantwood's new dancing master, Monsieur Le Blanc.

“No, I can't claim the honor.”

“You aren't familiar with his name?”

“No, I must admit that Le Blanc is a blank to me,” laughed the young woman.

Soon all the girls arrived and the practice began. First they tapped out a lively number, then worked on an eccentric dance.

Gradually the room became dark. Miss Grover snapped on the electric lights, so no one noticed the turn the weather had taken. Presently Kay glanced toward the windows and was astonished to see how black the sky had become. However, as the practice went on she became so absorbed in the work that she paid no heed to the approaching storm.

Suddenly everyone in the room was startled by a vivid flash of lightning. At the same moment the current of electricity was shut off. Many of the students screamed with fright. The pianist stopped playing and the dance came to an abrupt end.

“Now, girls, this is nothing,” said Miss Grover calmly. “Just a little storm. In a moment the lights will go on again. Then we shall resume——”

Her words trailed away as a mighty blast of wind shook the school building. It whipped about the window sills, rattling the panes. Outside the trees could be heard creaking and cracking as they bent before the onslaught.

Then without warning a heavy object crashed through the skylight of the auditorium. Acting instinctively, Kay hurled herself against Betty who stood directly beneath the splintered glass. As she pushed her out of the way, a large chunk of wood fell to the floor, barely missing both girls.

“Oh!” gasped Betty, staring at the object. “If that thing had struck me on the head I might have been killed! You saved my life!”

The other girls gathered about Kay, and despite her protests that “it was nothing,” insisted upon regarding her as a heroine. She was relieved when Miss Grover, alarmed by the intensity of the storm, urged the dancers to go quickly to the dressing room.

“The storm seems to be increasing in violence,” she declared nervously. “It is not safe here.”

While the girls were changing their costumes, the electric lights came on again. Soon Kay and the twins were ready to leave the building. They found many students gathered at the exit, afraid to brave the raging wind.

“What shall we do, Kay?” Wilma asked as the chums stood at the door.

“The wind may not die down for a good while. If we wait here very long we’ll miss our train.”

“Oh, I think we can reach the station,” declared Betty confidently.

“Let’s try it,” urged Kay, buttoning her coat up around her neck.

With heads bent low, the girls started away from the school grounds. The velocity of the wind was even greater than they had thought. Dust was blown into their eyes. Betty’s hat was whipped from her head, while Kay had difficulty in holding fast to her books and papers. At last they reached the railroad station rather exhausted from the battle.

“The storm surely will have passed over by the time we get to Brantwood,” Wilma said hopefully.

When the train presently pulled into the home station the girls discovered that the wind was blowing harder than before.

“It’s silly to try to walk home in this,” declared Kay. “Let’s take a cab.”

They summoned a taxi and with sighs of relief settled themselves for a comfortable ride. After Wilma and Betty got out at their home, Kay went on alone. Presently, coming within view of the Tracey residence, the girl began to gather up her scattered books and papers. A folded yellow sheet, which was lying on the seat, drew her attention.

“That doesn’t belong to me,” Kay thought, picking it up.

She was puzzled further because she knew Wilma and Betty had brought no papers of any description home with them from school. Very likely the sheet had been left in the taxi by a passenger.

Curious, Kay unfolded it to see if it had any value. Her eye fell upon a long, typewritten list of names. After each appeared a capital letter, W, P, or M printed with a pencil.

“I wonder if this is some sort of mailing list?” mused the girl.

She was on the verge of turning over the page to the cab driver when a name stood out on the sheet, fairly shrieking for attention. It was her own, Kay Tracey!

After the name had been written a designating letter. It was M.

“Now what can M signify?” thought Kay. “This is certainly an interesting list.”

Instantly she decided not to give up the paper until she should have an opportunity to study it carefully. As the cab stopped in front of her house, she slipped the yellow sheet into her pocketbook and made no mention of it when she paid the driver.

The front door was locked. Kay rang several times before the laundress finally came to let her inside.

“Your mother went away to visit a sick friend,” the woman explained. “She said to tell you she might not get back before late evening. I’m to stay until she comes.”

“Did Mother leave me a note, Parky?”

“Yes, it’s upstairs in your room.”

Kay read the message; then, sprawling flat on the bed, she studied the paper which she had found in the taxicab. Scarcely had she started to scan the list of names when there came a light tap on the door.

“Yes. What is it?”

Parky entered the room. Kay saw at once that the woman was disturbed.

“You are wanted at the front door, Miss Tracey.”

Kay sprang from the bed, straightening her rumpled frock.

“Oh, you should have invited the visitor into the living room. You mustn’t keep anyone waiting outside on a day like this.”

The laundress shifted her weight uncomfortably.

“I wouldn’t have done it only he’s not very nice,” she explained by way of apology. “A very common looking man. If you take my advice, you won’t let him into the house!”

CHAPTER VI

AN ARROGANT VISITOR

“Oh, I’ll not invite him inside,” promised Kay as she descended the stairs. “I’ll just find out——”

She broke off and drew in her breath sharply. Seated on a sofa, calmly blowing smoke rings, was the caller whom the laundress had refused to admit! During the woman’s absence he had boldly entered the house and made himself at home.

As Kay went slowly down the stairway, he arose and gazed at her with a smirk which evidently was intended to be friendly. When the girl did not speak he said:

“You are Mees Kay Drazy?”

Then he walked forward, offering his hand. Kay pretended not to notice the gesture.

“Yes, I am Miss Tracey,” she answered, hiding her irritation.

“You and me will do some beezness together, yes?” he announced breezily.

Seating himself again, he blew another smoke ring toward the ceiling.

“I am sure I don’t know what business we could have together,” replied Kay coldly. “You have not even told me your name.”

“Ho! Ho! What eez een a name? That poet, he say: ‘A rhoze he smell good if you call heem a cockle-da-burr.’”

Kay ignored the man’s crude attempt to avoid telling his name. His clothes were soiled and mussed, his hands were dirty, and she wondered if he might not be a tramp. Her one thought was to get him out of the house as quickly as she could!

“You have never seen me before,” he went on. “But never mind. I have seen you, Mees Drazy. On the day you have the beeg trouble I see you.”

Kay immediately surmised that the man was referring to the automobile accident, though how he could have learned of it she did not know. She had told no one save her mother and the Worth twins of Mr. Craken’s claim for damages.

“I see you on the day of the beeg accident,” went on the man. “You need someone to testify you were not in the smash-up, maybe?”

“And you are willing to testify in my behalf?” Kay questioned in surprise.

“Sure, I make a nize air-tight alibi for you. Of course you pay me, say fifty dollar?”

Kay suspected now that she was dealing with a schemer. Still, there was a faint chance that the man might have seen her on the day of the accident. She did not wish to lose track of him until she was certain that he could be of no help to her. At least it would be worth while to learn how the man had heard about the accident.

“I must discuss this matter with my mother,” she said to end the interview. “Fifty dollars is a very high fee for a witness.”

“You be glad to pay eet, I theenk,” answered the man as he arose.

“Where can I reach you again?”

“Oh, I come back in a few days,” he returned as he walked to the door. “Good-bye, Mees Drazy.”

Kay stood at the window and watched the man until he had disappeared around the corner. She distrusted him, yet she thought it possible she might be prejudiced because of his bad manners and unpleasant way of speaking. He really could have seen her on the day of the accident. She had taken a long walk with only her dog Jerry as a companion, and it was during this period that the auto smash-up had occurred.

Late that evening when her mother returned, Kay told her about the tramp’s visit. Mrs. Tracey shared her daughter’s belief that the man would not make a reliable witness, but she declared that Kay had been wise in telling him to come back again.

“If only Bill were here,” she sighed. “I can’t understand why he doesn’t return home or at least let us know where he is staying. If he doesn’t come tomorrow I shall be worried on his account as well as yours.”

“Oh, Cousin Bill is well able to take care of himself,” responded Kay comfortingly. “I shouldn’t be surprised if he went off somewhere on a secret mission.”

“Why do you think that?”

“Well, now that I look back I recollect he had hinted for weeks that he might be called away on a mysterious case.”

The next day the girl made the rounds of the Carmont and Brantwood police stations. She could find no record of the accident case, nor was she able to locate the policeman who had identified her as the driver of the car which had caused the smash-up. However, she did obtain a promise that a thorough investigation of the matter would be made.

Slightly reassured, Kay decided to drive to Ottenville to make secret inquiry regarding the firm of Duster and Trout. While returning home for her car she met Ronald Earle. When he learned her plans the young man instantly suggested that he be allowed to take her to the distant town.

“Oh, that would be great!” accepted Kay eagerly. “I’d much rather not make the long ride alone.”

She ran into a store to telephone her mother; then in Ronald’s car set out for Ottenville. Motoring along Sunset Drive, they

presently passed the Huntley mansion. Kay noticed that the blinds were drawn. A car was coming slowly down the driveway.

“That looks like the Eaton auto,” she observed, turning her head to glance back. “Yes, it’s Ethel—alone.”

“I wonder what she is doing at the Huntley place?” remarked Ronald curiously.

“I can guess. She’s probably taking dancing lessons from Monsieur Le Blanc without her mother’s knowledge.”

When they finally reached the city, Kay found she had neglected to bring the address of the Ottenville law firm with her. Ronald went to look up the name in a directory. As the girl waited in the car, her attention suddenly was drawn to a man crossing the street at a brisk pace.

“Why, it’s Mr. Craken!” the girl thought alertly. “He must live in Ottenville.”

She saw him enter a store and make his way toward a telephone booth. Scarcely had the man disappeared when a poorly dressed fellow who had been lounging near by sauntered past the shop. He stared through the plate glass window, then quietly entered.

“Mr. Craken is being watched!” Kay told herself, “and by that same man who offered to be a witness for me!”

Her curiosity aroused, the girl darted across the street. After a moment’s hesitation she went into the store. There was the

tramp standing by the telephone booth, pretending to examine a display of merchandise. Actually he was eavesdropping upon the conversation of the man in the booth.

The owner of the store, occupied with a customer, did not notice Kay. Quickly she crouched behind one of the high counters which was loaded with canned goods; nor had she been observed by the tramp. She was now out of sight of both the tramp and the man in the booth, yet she could hear the telephone conversation, for Mr. Craken spoke in a loud voice.

“Sure, everything’s sewed up tight on that Tracey case,” she heard him say. “Yeah, the girl’s got to be guilty. Nothing to it.”

Kay hoped that Mr. Craken would reveal more, but he abruptly hung up the receiver and hurried from the store. The tramp who had been eavesdropping waited a moment, then followed.

“He was listening, all right,” Kay told herself thoughtfully. “Now I wonder if that fellow may know something which will be helpful to my case. Perhaps I ought not to be hasty in dismissing him.”

She straightened up from her cramped position behind the counter. Before she could leave the store the owner came to attend her, so she was compelled to buy a can of beans. Ronald was waiting for her when she returned to the car.

“I bought you a little present,” she laughed, dropping the can into his lap. “I thought you might be hungry.”

“Say, what is this, a joke?” demanded Ronald.

Kay quickly explained why she had purchased the food.

“Say, I saw those same two fellows come out of the store only a minute ago!”

“Which way did they go, Ronald?”

“The first fellow started down Cannon Street, and the other trailed him.”

“Suppose we follow them both! I’d give a lot to learn where Mr. Craken goes.”

Ronald turned the car around and the couple toured Cannon Street to its very end. There was no sign of either Mr. Craken or the tramp.

“Well, it’s no use,” Kay decided at last. “Probably they turned off at a side street. Did you get the address of the Duster and Trout firm?”

“It wasn’t in the telephone directory.”

“Then it must be a new firm.”

“I asked the druggist. He said he’d never heard of them. Then I stopped two persons on the street. Duster and Trout was unknown to them too.”

“Oh, dear, it was so careless of me to come without the letter,” Kay chided herself. “Still, the day hasn’t been lost.”

“We can drive over again tomorrow,” Ronald suggested eagerly. “I’ll be glad to bring you.”

“Maybe that won’t be necessary. If Cousin Bill gets home I’ll turn the entire matter over to him.”

Ronald suggested that before returning to Brantwood they stop somewhere for ice cream. At the Pickworth Inn they met one of the young man’s friends. The time passed pleasantly and swiftly. It was very late before Kay finally started toward Brantwood.

“I had intended to ask you to stop for a moment at the Huntley house,” she remarked as she and Ronald approached the old mansion. “I suppose we shouldn’t take the time now.”

“You’re pretty deeply interested in that place, aren’t you?” he teased, glancing at his watch.

“Oh, not in the house. Only in the persons who live there. I wish I knew how the Le Blancs came to rent the place.”

“Maybe I could find out for you.”

“Oh, Ronald, I wish you would! I believe that my double, Jane Barton, somehow is connected with them.”

“We may as well stop there now if you think you could pick up any useful information,” said Ronald, switching on the car

headlights. “It’s nearly seven-thirty, so we’ve already missed our dinners.”

“How did it get to be so late?” gasped Kay in dismay. “Well, I’ll take only a minute. I’ll just rap once on the door and ask if Jane Barton lives there.”

Ronald parked his auto in front of the old mansion. A few lights twinkled in the upper floor windows but the lower part of the house appeared to be dark.

“Shall I go with you?” Ronald offered, opening the car door.

“You needn’t bother. I’ll be back in a moment.”

Kay ran up the path to the house. Then she hesitated, deciding to try the back door instead of the front. As she rounded the corner and glanced toward the sunken garden, she saw a sight which caused her to halt abruptly.

A ghostly figure could be seen flitting across the terraces. As Kay watched, it danced gracefully through the ruined pagoda and then merged into the darkness.

CHAPTER VII

THE PAGODA GHOST

Kay brushed a hand across her eyes. Was it her imagination, or had she actually observed a white figure moving about in the sunken garden?

To satisfy herself, she went quickly down the stone steps leading to the terraces. As she approached the ruined tea house she again caught a glimpse of the “ghost.” This time she knew that her eyes had not deceived her. Standing perfectly still, she watched the graceful movements.

“It is someone dancing,” she whispered to herself. “A very talented young woman. I wonder—could it be Jane?”

Kay hastened forward. In her eagerness she did not notice where she was walking and without warning stumbled. Her shoe made a loud, grating sound on the cement.

Instantly the white-robed figure stopped dancing. Kay thought she heard a slightly choked cry, but could not be certain. In any case the ghost turned and fled, not toward the house as one would have expected, but deeper into the garden.

“Jane! Jane!” Kay called softly. “Please don’t run away. I am your friend.”

There was no answer, only a rustling movement of the bushes. Kay waited a moment, then walked slowly toward the summer house. It was too dark to see anyone in the garden, yet she sensed that the dancer was lingering somewhere near. She could almost feel a presence. Perhaps if she should remain very quiet for a little while the young woman might return.

As Kay sat down on a bench inside the open pagoda, her hand brushed against an object on the seat. She realized it was a lunch basket.

“This isn’t the same one that was here the other day,” she thought, feeling the handle. “Hello! Now what have I found?”

Fastened to the basket handle with a stout cord was a folded piece of paper. Instantly the conviction came to Kay that it was a note. Someone had left the empty lunch basket and a message for the person who presently would come to claim it!

“Perhaps this little note will throw light upon the whole situation,” the girl told herself as she fumbled with the string. “I wish I had a flashlight so I could read it here.”

Stealthily someone was approaching the pagoda but Kay did not hear the steps. Suddenly the bench upon which she was seated was tilted forward. Taken completely by surprise, the

girl tumbled awkwardly to the floor. Quickly she scrambled to her feet and groped about for the lunch basket. It was gone, and the note as well!

To the right, on a path which led toward the river, the Tracey girl could hear the patter of running feet. She took up the pursuit, but soon realized there was little chance for her to overtake the fleeing person. She was unfamiliar with the devious trails which wound through the garden, while the individual ahead seemed to know every inch of the grounds.

The pursuit came to an abrupt end, when Kay stumbled over a trailing rose vine. Down she went, falling full length on the cinder path. The jolt was a hard one, so for a minute the girl lay still, nursing a bruised elbow. Then, hearing her name called, she pulled herself to a sitting position.

“Kay! Kay! Where are you?” It was Ronald’s voice.

“Here!” she responded weakly. “Down in the garden.”

She kept calling until he located her in the darkness.

“What are you doing here?” he asked, helping her to her feet.

“Are you hurt?”

“I twisted my ankle a little, and bruised my elbow.”

“What happened?”

“I was chasing a ghost and tripped over a rose vine.”

“A ghost? Say, be serious, will you?”

“Anyway, it was a figure clad in a white robe. You see, just as I reached the house I saw someone dancing in the garden. When I called to her she ran away.”

“Are you sure it was a woman, Kay?”

“I didn’t see her face, but from the graceful way she danced I feel certain she wasn’t a man.”

“Do you think you can walk to the car?”

“Of course,” insisted Kay, although her face twisted with pain as she took a step. She was glad that Ronald could not see the grimace.

“Lean on me all you can,” he advised, helping her up the steps.

Scarcely had they reached the last one, when a dog began to bark. The animal came bounding toward them from the direction of the house, growling so savagely that Ronald seized a stick.

“Everyone in the mansion will learn that we’ve been prowling about here,” Kay murmured anxiously.

As she spoke the back door of the house opened. In the light Madame Le Blanc’s thin figure was silhouetted.

“Who is there?” she called shrilly.

Kay and Ronald stood motionless, making no reply. To their relief the dog turned and ran back to his mistress. Taking him by the collar the woman led him into the house.

“I thought surely she would see us,” Kay laughed nervously when the door had closed. “That was a narrow escape.”

When they reached the car, Ronald lifted her into the seat.

“I’ll take you to a doctor,” he said. “I’m worried about your ankle.”

“Oh, it’s nothing,” Kay insisted. “Just a tiny sprain. Tomorrow I’ll be dancing on it. If I should go to a doctor he would tell me to keep off of it for a day, and I can’t afford to do that. Not while we’re practicing for the benefit show.”

The next morning her ankle did feel much better, but while she was able to walk again without limping, Miss Grover thought it advisable not to strain the muscles by overtaxing them. At her suggestion Kay watched the dance club go through its routine, instead of taking an active part.

“You’re not missing much,” remarked Ethel Eaton who had entered the gymnasium to watch the rehearsal. “In all my life I never saw such awkward work.”

“Well, of course you have the advantage of professional instruction,” Kay said mischievously.

Ethel gave the girl a quick, suspicious glance. “What do you mean, Kay Tracey?”

“Aren’t you taking lessons from the great dancing master, Monsieur Le Blanc?”

“I didn’t say I was, did I?” A half frightened look came into Ethel’s eyes. Hastily she fled from the gymnasium.

When Kay reached home that afternoon she learned that no word had been received from Cousin Bill. Mrs. Tracey could not hide her concern.

“I have decided to talk with Bill’s secretary,” she told Kay. “She is waiting for me at his office. Would you mind doing an errand for me while I am away?”

“I’ll be glad to, Mother. What is it?”

“Do you remember old Mrs. Cary? She has been a semi-invalid for many years now.”

“Doesn’t she live in a little white cottage beyond Hillman’s farm?”

“Yes, not far from the edge of town. Mrs. Cary did some sewing for me, and I have neglected to pay her. I wish you would give her this five-dollar bill and tell her I appreciated the work.”

Kay put the money in her pocketbook. After her mother had driven away in the car, she called Jerry and set off at a brisk walk with the dog. Presently she turned into the woods for a short cut.

Kay had not gone far when she thought she heard footsteps behind her. Glancing back, she could see no one. Several times Jerry stopped and growled.

“Someone is following me!” Kay decided nervously.

She quickened her step, taking care to keep close beside the dog. After a while the crackling in the underbrush ceased. Kay relaxed her vigilance slightly, deciding that the person she had heard might have been a hunter. Or perhaps the sound had been made by an animal.

Then unexpectedly Jerry stopped short in the path, pointed his ears, and growled. Before Kay could take advantage of the warning, a man in shabby clothing darted from behind a pile of brush where he had been lying in wait. Seizing her pocketbook, he turned and fled.

CHAPTER VIII

MRS. CARY'S STORY

“After him, Jerry!” cried Kay, pointing toward the runner.

The dog had not waited for an order from his mistress. Upon his own initiative, he already had taken up the pursuit. Catching up with the purse snatcher, he seized his trouser leg and held fast until Kay ran over to him.

“Give me my pocketbook!” she commanded angrily.

The fellow offered no resistance as she jerked it from his hand. She saw then that he was not more than twenty years of age, and did not have a vicious looking face.

“I—I’m sorry,” he muttered, hanging his head. “I don’t know why I did such a thing.”

“You followed me from the edge of town,” accused Kay.

“I—I was desperate,” he said softly. “You don’t know—what it means—to be hungry. If you did you would let me go.”

Kay could not help but feel a little sorry for the young man. She hesitated, then commanded Jerry to release him.

“Tell me your name,” she said, watching him closely.

“Folks just call me Binky,” he answered. “Binky Kemp. I don’t know my real name. My parents left me on a doorstep when I was a baby.”

“And you’ve had a hard time of it?” inquired Kay in a more sympathetic tone.

“It wasn’t so bad until just lately. Now I can’t get work and my pal deserted me. He stuck as long as I had any money. When it was gone, he blew.”

“What sort of work have you been doing?”

“Oh, just about everything. My last job was as a machinist. I’d take anything I could get. No chance, though. I’m broke and I haven’t a friend in the world.”

“Perhaps I can help you,” said Kay slowly.

“You, Miss? After the way I tried to steal your pocketbook?”

“We’ll forget about that, Binky. If you’ll promise to go straight, I’ll see if I can find a job for you.”

“Say, you’re regular!” the young man exclaimed.

“Then you will give me your promise?”

“I’ll never steal again as long as I live. I wouldn’t have snatched your purse only I was desperate.”

Kay took fifty cents from her pocketbook and gave it to the youth. She also wrote her name and address on a card which she handed to him.

“Here, use this money to buy yourself a hearty meal,” she instructed. “Then come to the house and I’ll see what I can do for you.”

As Kay went through the woods, after parting company with Binky, she wondered if she had done a foolish thing. Another person would have turned the young man over to the police and forgotten the incident.

“He may never come to the house,” she told herself. “But if he should, how will I produce that job I promised him? My sympathies always are getting me into tangles such as this.”

Upon arriving at the cottage of Mrs. Cary, the girl temporarily dismissed the problem from her mind. However, as she paid the old lady for the sewing, she could not resist telling of her adventure in the woods.

“Mercy me, I hope that young scamp doesn’t hide out in the woods,” responded Mrs. Cary, rocking nervously back and forth in her chair. “He might try to break into my cottage tonight.”

“I hardly think he will bother you,” Kay returned reassuringly. “The fellow did not seem like a mean sort of person.”

“Maybe he’s just a weak character,” the old lady admitted. “You can’t tell how a young person will turn out these days.”

Sometimes the ones who have all the advantages end up the worst. Now take that Huntley girl for example—she had as good a chance in life as any person in this town. But what happened to her?”

“What *did* happen?” Kay asked alertly. “I never heard the story, Mrs. Cary.”

“Huntley wasn’t her real name,” the old lady explained. “She was a sister to Mrs. Huntley, but the two of them were often spoken of as the Huntley girls.”

“What was her name?” asked Kay.

“Trixie Rue. She was a dancer and folks said she had a promising career ahead of her. But she married and had a baby. Things didn’t go well with her after that. Her husband couldn’t make a living. They kept going down and down until finally the poor girl resorted to theft.”

“Couldn’t the Huntleys have helped her?”

“Mrs. Huntley did try. I know, because I worked for her as housekeeper at the time. Secretly she would send me to the house with money for Trixie. Apparently it wasn’t enough to save the girl from disaster.”

“From whom did Trixie steal the money?” Kay asked as the old lady lapsed into silence.

“I can’t tell you that. In fact, I’m not sure whether she took the money or whether it was her husband. You see, I gave up my job as housekeeper for Mrs. Huntley when she and her

husband went to Europe. As I remember, it was about that time Trixie had all her trouble.”

“I see,” commented Kay thoughtfully. “What became of Trixie and her child?”

Mrs. Cary shook her head. “I often think about it. They disappeared from Brantwood and weren’t heard from again. I never even saw the little girl, for she was in boarding school at the time. Mrs. Huntley paid her expenses, I believe. Oh, it was a sad case.”

“The Huntleys never returned here either?”

“No. I suppose the disgrace kept them from coming home. Mr. Huntley died in Europe soon after they went there. His wife stayed in Paris, and I was told that she too passed away.”

The story was intensely interesting to Kay, who felt disappointed because Mrs. Cary could not provide all the details of the theft. Her curiosity in the Huntley house had been aroused first by Ronald’s hint that a mystery was connected with the place. She would like nothing better than to piece together the various clues!

On the way home Kay reflected that with a lawsuit pending against her, she would be wise to devote her energy to her own difficulties rather than to those of Trixie Rue. Finding that her mother had returned from downtown, she asked for news.

“Bill’s secretary hasn’t heard a word from him,” Mrs. Tracey reported. “She too is beginning to worry about his absence, although she feels certain he is gathering evidence for an important case.”

“I should think Cousin Bill would have given us a hint when he would return,” said Kay. “My situation looks more serious every day.”

“We could employ another lawyer, only I dislike to do that,” replied Mrs. Tracey.

“If I can’t have Cousin Bill, I’ll be my own lawyer!” Kay announced with a laugh. “I’ve just about made up my mind to drive over to Ottenville and have a talk with the firm of Duster and Trout.”

Kay dreaded the trip, for by this time she suspected that she was dealing with shrewd, ruthless men who meant to build up a case against her regardless of the true facts. She did not alarm her mother further by telling of the conversation she had overheard in the Ottenville store, but it deeply disturbed her.

It was well after five o’clock before Kay reached the offices of Duster and Trout, located at the address given on her letter. There was no elevator in the building. After climbing two flights of stairs, she entered a poorly furnished reception room. A girl who was chewing gum with great enjoyment left her desk and came over to greet the caller.

“Something?”

“Yes, I should like to see Mr. Duster or Mr. Trout, please.”

“They’ve both left for the day,” returned the stenographer, patting her blond hair to make certain each curl was in place.

“Mr. Trout went to see a client, and Mr. Duster’s playing golf.”

“Oh, dear, and I drove all the way from Brantwood. I suppose I should have telephoned.”

“Would you like to leave your name?”

“That would do no good, I am afraid. I wanted to talk with one of the firm members about a lawsuit which is being brought against me.”

“Say, you’re not the Tracey girl?”

“Yes, I am,” Kay admitted, adding slyly, “I don’t suppose you know anything about the case?”

“I know about every bit of business that goes through this office,” the stenographer boasted. “I type up all the briefs and write most of the letters. Yours was the auto accident case.”

“Yes, but I’m sure your firm has no evidence against me.”

“Well, you just guess again!” The stenographer laughed in a superior way. “Mr. Trout has three witnesses lined up already. They will all testify that you smashed into Mr. Craken’s car while driving at a high speed. After injuring a passenger, you left the scene of the accident. That means a

criminal as well as a civil suit. Oh, you were pretty dumb, especially when you borrowed another person's car. You'll pay plenty before you get through."

"Will I?" inquired Kay softly.

"Mr. Duster almost never loses a case," the girl went on boastfully.

"Nearly all of them are damage suits, I imagine."

"Just about. Our firm specializes in accident cases. I'd advise you to settle out of court if you can. You'll get off easier that way."

"Thank you," replied Kay dryly. "And now since you have been so kind as to give me advice, I might offer a little of my own. Unless you wish to lose your job, don't tell your employers how much you have told me."

"Say, what do you mean?" the girl demanded in alarm. "I didn't tell you anything——"

Smiling, Kay went out the door and closed it firmly behind her. As she descended the steps, the lines of her face again tightened. While she had gained useful information, it meant also that trouble lay ahead for her. Already Duster and Trout had three witnesses while she had not a single person to testify in her behalf.

"I might employ that tramp who came to the house," she thought ruefully. "If only he were an honest person!"

While her suspicions had been aroused, Kay had no way of knowing whether or not the firm of Duster and Trout was a reliable concern. It was possible the two lawyers had accepted Mr. Craken's case in good faith. On the other hand they might have taken all the steps in building up false evidence against her.

Where did Jane Barton figure in the affair? Had the girl been mistaken for her because of their remarkable resemblance, or was she in the employ of Mr. Craken? Until now it had not occurred to Kay that her double might have been used for the deliberate purpose of planting evidence against herself!

"Cousin Bill often has mentioned that dishonest law firms sometimes build up false cases, frightening their victims into paying large sums of money," she reflected. "Perhaps I've been singled out as an easy mark."

Kay was still turning over the problem in her mind as she approached the hillside street where she had left her car. Glancing toward the place where she had parked it, she stopped short. Then a bewildered expression came over her face.

The automobile was gone!

CHAPTER IX

DOUBLE TROUBLE FOR KAY

A heavy delivery truck now stood at the curb in the place where Kay had left her car.

“Could I have made a mistake?” she asked herself, gazing up and down the long row of parked vehicles. “I seem to remember stopping near this vacant lot.”

Slowly she walked along the street, staring at every automobile. Observing one of the same make as her own, she went over and tried the door handle.

“Hey, you! Get away from my car!” shouted an angry voice.

Kay whirled around to face a man who had just come out of a grocery store with an armload of bundles.

“Say, what are you trying to do, steal my car?” he demanded suspiciously.

“I mistook it for my own,” apologized Kay, hastily retreating. “I’m sorry.”

Farther up the street she saw another machine which looked enough like her own to warrant an investigation. As she was

trying to fit a key into the ignition lock, two women appeared and angrily threatened to call a policeman. Again Kay explained, apologized, and fled.

“It’s just no use searching any longer,” she decided after she had covered several streets. “The car has been stolen. Nothing to do but notify the police.”

Disheartened, she made her report at the station house, and was told that if the car should be located she would be notified. She then considered how she would get home. A taxi would be too expensive. She must take a train.

At the depot Kay learned that she would have to wait at least two hours. Realizing that her mother would be worried over her long absence, she made up her mind to telephone home.

As no one answered at the Tracey residence, she finally called the Worth twins. After listening to a brief account of what had happened, her chums assured her they would locate her mother and convey the message.

“You might ask her to call back,” Kay suggested, before hanging up the receiver.

“Where will you be until train time?” inquired Wilma.

“I plan to eat dinner just across the street at the Mad Hatter’s Tea Room. I’ll be waiting for the call.”

The Mad Hatter’s Tea Room proved to be a pleasant, inexpensive restaurant half filled with diners. As she entered, Kay paused at the cashier’s desk.

“If a telephone call should come for Miss Tracey, will you please notify me?” she requested.

“Yes, certainly.”

Kay found a table in a secluded corner of the room. After giving her order to a waitress, she busied herself writing an English theme. Several times she caught herself squinting at the paper, for the only illumination in the place was provided by one candle on each table.

So absorbed was Kay in her writing that she did not notice a good-looking young man who presently entered the tea room. He saw her at once. Smiling with delight he came over to her table.

“Hello, there,” he said, sliding into the vacant chair opposite her. “I didn’t expect to find you in Ottenville.”

Kay glanced up and was so startled that she nearly revealed her panic. He was the same young man who had spoken to her in the flower shop!

“He has mistaken me again for my double,” she thought swiftly. “If only I could pretend I am Jane Barton, I might be able to learn a few worth-while facts!”

Kay knew that she should admit her identity at once, telling the young man that he had made a mistake. But the temptation was too great to resist.

“Where have you been keeping yourself lately?” he asked, smiling at her. “Not trying to avoid me, are you?”

“Oh, no,” murmured Kay in a slightly nasal voice. She raised her handkerchief so that it half covered her face. “I’ve been sick. I’m just getting over a bad cold.”

“Say, that’s a shame,” he replied sympathetically. “I noticed right off that your voice was husky. You look thinner, too.”

Kay nodded and hid a smile. She was feeling a trifle more at ease now. But she must be on her guard constantly if she did not wish to reveal her identity. Playing the role of a girl she had never seen was indeed a risky undertaking!

“I’ll bet old Blancky has been working you too hard,” the young man went on. “You ought to let me tell him a thing or two!”

“Would that do any good, do you think?”

“It would do *me* a lot of good anyway,” he said feelingly. “That old fossil is a slave driver.”

“I have been working hard,” Kay answered, taking care to keep her face lowered.

“Sure, Blancky hasn’t any consideration for anyone. All he thinks about is his own gain!”

Kay wondered whom the young man meant by Old Blancky but she did not dare ask. Was it possible that he referred to Monsieur Le Blanc?

“I wish you would give up your career,” the young man went on, leaning closer. “You know you can marry me any time

you say the word.”

Kay was grateful indeed for the candlelight. Behind the shield afforded by her handkerchief, her face flushed a delicate pink. She wished now that she had not taken the role upon herself for she could foresee any number of embarrassing complications.

The telephone rang.

Hearing the sound, Kay started and half arose from her chair. She was almost certain that the call was for her. Probably it was her mother telephoning in response to the message Wilma and Betty had given her.

“My, you are nervous!” observed the young man, Watching her curiously. “You’ve certainly been working too hard. I notice a big change in you even since the last time we met. You’re not yourself at all.”

“I certainly am not myself today,” Kay agreed, her eyes upon the waitress who was answering the telephone.

Observing that the woman was writing down an order for a party, she relaxed once more. The telephone call had not been for her. She would be safe for a few minutes longer at least.

Now that it was too late to do anything about it, she inwardly berated herself for having given the cashier her name. If the call should come through she would be singled out immediately!

“Why did I get myself into such a pickle?” the harassed girl asked herself. “If only I could induce him to leave before he suspects my true identity!”

A waitress came with Kay’s food, and the young man immediately gave his dinner order.

“I hardly think you’ll like this place,” Kay said discouragingly as she tasted her salad. “If I were you I would cancel my order and try another restaurant.”

“Oh, I like the food here,” he answered carelessly. “I often eat here. Anyway, I don’t care what I eat so long as I can be with you.”

Kay blushed again and glanced quickly toward the next table. The young man’s voice had carried to nearby diners who were listening to the conversation with interest.

“Oh, please,” she pleaded, “don’t say such things. At least not here.”

“But I never get a chance to see you alone. Whenever I telephone, you always say you are working.”

During the conversation Kay’s companion had not mentioned his own name nor that of her supposed self. She assumed that she might be playing the role of her double, Jane Barton, but it would be much easier if only she were certain. Yet she could not seem to think of questions which would lead the man to reveal the information she sought.

“I simply have to talk with you,” he went on in a more ardent voice. “When will you give me my answer?”

“Oh—I—don’t know,” Kay stammered, avoiding his direct glance. “I wish you wouldn’t——”

The telephone rang again. This time she was certain it was for her.

“Excuse me,” she said quickly. Arising, she went toward the telephone desk. To her intense annoyance the persistent young man also arose and came after her.

“Listen, you mustn’t leave now,” he protested.

Despite her haste Kay did not reach the telephone ahead of the waitress. She realized that unless she could get rid of the young lover, she was almost certain to be exposed.

Turning toward him she said in an urgent undertone, “If you will go now, I will make you a promise. I will meet you here again, but you must agree not to try to communicate with me until then.”

“When will you meet me?” he asked eagerly.

“In four days.”

“Next Tuesday evening?”

“Yes, at eight o’clock,” Kay agreed desperately. “Now please go.”

She actually gave the young man a little push which started him toward the door, but he was so thrilled by her promise that he scarcely noticed the gesture. It did not occur to him that the girl was eager to get him out of the restaurant. Other diners had witnessed the little scene and were smiling in amusement.

Kay breathed a sigh of relief, thinking that she was safe. However, before the man could reach the exit, the waitress called in a loud voice which could be heard plainly throughout the room:

“Telephone call for you, Miss Tracey!”

CHAPTER X

INSIDE THE MANSION

Kay glanced toward the door and was relieved to note that the young man had not heard her name spoken. Observing her gaze upon him, he beamed happily and went out the door.

“I’ll take the call,” Kay said, turning to the waitress.

She was fully aware of the amused glances which were directed toward her as she sat down at the telephone desk, but she did not mind. Doubtlessly many of the diners thought that she had sent the young man away so she could make an engagement with a rival!

The call was from Kay’s mother. Wilma and Betty had located her at a neighbor’s home and had reported the theft of the car.

“Now don’t worry about it, dear,” Mrs. Tracey said kindly. “Fortunately we are covered by insurance. You plan to come home on the train?”

“Yes, I should reach Brantwood around nine o’clock.”

“I’ll look up the exact schedule,” Mrs. Tracey promised, “and meet you at the station.”

“Oh, that won’t be necessary—” Kay began, but her mother had hung up the receiver.

After finishing her dinner, the girl spent a few minutes reading a newspaper, then walked slowly toward the railroad station. As it still lacked three quarters of an hour until train time, she sauntered along past the depot for several blocks.

The thoroughfare was an unusually long one, which descended to the bottom of a hill.

Now as she approached a corner, her attention suddenly was drawn to a car without lights. Its front tires had been rammed sharply into the curb.

“That looks like my automobile!” she thought, quickening her step.

Kay scarcely dared hope, for she had been mistaken twice before. Yet as she drew near she was almost certain that the auto was hers. Even the scratch on the fender was the same.

“This *is* my car!” Kay told herself triumphantly.

She jerked open the glove compartment on the dash board. Inside was an old golf score, a discarded letter, and a flashlight, articles which instantly identified the automobile as belonging to the Tracey family.

“This is luck,” Kay thought as she fitted a key into the ignition lock. “But how did the car get here?”

It did not seem reasonable to suppose that thieves would have abandoned the automobile so near the place from which it had been stolen. It was far more likely that the truck driver who had parked in the space previously occupied by Kay's car had wished to make a delivery. Deliberately he had pushed her automobile out of the way, steering it far down the hill.

“All the trouble that man has caused me!” Kay told herself indignantly. “I just wish I had caught him at the trick. I must report my find at the police station.”

Upon her earlier visit to Headquarters, Kay had inquired about the Craken accident case, and had been told that nothing had been turned in. The police officer in charge had promised to make an investigation. Now, before leaving the station, she asked if anything new had been learned. The answer was in the negative.

“It's certainly queer,” Kay reflected as she drove toward home. “Here I have been sued for damages, yet I can't find a police record against me. It begins to look more and more like a frame-up.”

Since her visit to the offices of Duster and Trout she recognized the great importance of locating her double. Convinced that Jane Barton lived with the Le Blancs, she considered whether or not it would be worth while to make one more attempt to contact the girl. As Kay drew near the old Huntley mansion, she could see a dim light in the lower windows. After a moment of debate she turned into the

driveway. Parking out of sight near the road, she walked up to the house.

Twice she rang the doorbell but no one answered. Deciding to try the back door, Kay made her way quietly around the house. It was so dark, she could not see a foot in front of her.

Suddenly she heard voices. Two persons, a man and a woman, were somewhere in the sunken garden. They were speaking rapidly in French. From the loud tones Kay felt certain she had become an unintentional eavesdropper to a quarrel. At first she could understand nothing, but presently as the man's anger faded, he spoke in English.

“There iss no peaze for me here, *jamais!* Always the quarrel, the bicker, noise, noise, noise! All I ask iss that I be left alone with my art.”

“Your art!” exclaimed the woman. “All I hear is talk about your art! Who has made your art schemes possible? My brother!”

“*Oui*, but not with ze honest money.”

“I'll not allow you to speak like that against Lazarre!” the woman cried angrily. “You are—what you call it—an ingrate!”

By this time Kay had no doubt but that she was listening to a bitter quarrel between Madame Le Blanc and her talented husband. The reference to “dishonest money” interested her deeply, and she wished to learn more. As the voices dropped

lower, she pressed forward eagerly, fearful lest she miss a single word.

Gradually Kay could make out the shadowy forms of the couple, who stood near the ruined pagoda. Their faces were toward her. At the same moment that she definitely identified them as Monsieur and Madame Le Blame, the latter observed a movement in the dark.

“Who is there?” she called sharply.

Kay remained perfectly still but could not deceive the woman.

“I see you *la-haut!*” the woman cried. “On the steps! Who is it?”

Kay did not reply. Instead she ran up the stone staircase. Then dodging from bush to bush, she started toward the driveway.

“After her!” screamed Madame Le Blanc to her husband. “We must not let her escape. No!”

Kay was amazed at the speed with which the lanky Frenchman could run. Almost before she was aware that he had taken up the chase, she felt his strong hands grasp her arm. In vain she struggled to free herself.

“Non, my *fille,*” the dancing master said, giving her a hard little shake. “How many times have I to tell you? Stay out of ze garden!”

Madame Le Blanc came running up. As soon as she had recovered her breath, she scolded the girl roundly in French. Kay did not understand much of this, but she kept her head bent low as if she were ashamed of her actions.

“Back into the house!” the woman commanded at the end of her tirade. “Go to your room and to bed!”

Taking Kay firmly by an arm she pulled the girl toward the house. The intruder did not resist for she knew that she had been mistaken for her double. If she should play her part well she might escape detection and at the same time gather valuable information! Would the Le Blancs realize their mistake when they should see her under lamp light? Madame Le Blanc opened the back door and gave Kay a little push into the kitchen.

“Do not come out again tonight,” she ordered sternly. “Go to bed. *Vite!* You understand?”

“*Oui,*” mumbled Kay, keeping her head bent low.

She was greatly relieved when the woman did not follow her into the house. As the door slammed shut behind her, the girl took a deep breath. Her capture had turned out very well indeed, for now she had accomplished the very thing she had tried so hard to do upon her previous visits. She actually was inside the old mansion and free to investigate!

Kay glanced about the kitchen with keen interest. The sink was piled high with unwashed dishes, but otherwise everything appeared to be in order. Whatever other faults she

might possess, Madame Le Blanc was not a slovenly housekeeper.

A dim light burned in the living room. After making certain that no one was there, Kay tiptoed in and looked about. She felt slightly disappointed, for the old fashioned furniture set primly against the walls gave the room a sedate appearance not at all in keeping with what she had expected.

“Just what did I think I would find here?” Kay asked herself with a smile. “I suppose the house ought to be filled with dancing girls!”

Moving to the foot of the circular stairway, she listened. Not a sound could be heard on the floor above. Either the place was deserted or else the members of the household were asleep.

“At least Jane Barton must live here,” Kay reflected as she stole quietly up the stairway. “Otherwise, the Le Blancs wouldn’t have pushed me in here.”

The upstairs hall was dark but she dared not turn on the electric lights. Groping her way along, she came to a closed door.

Kay pressed her ear against the panel and listened. Absolute quiet. To all appearances the upstairs floor was deserted.

“I ought not to leave without making certain,” she told herself. “It’s not likely I’ll ever have another opportunity such as this.”

Carefully she turned the knob and pushed open the door a tiny crack. Was it imagination or *HAD* she heard soft breathing?

After waiting a moment Kay tiptoed through the doorway. Not a glimmer of light illuminated the room. The girl paused on the threshold, for she sensed another presence.

“Imagination,” she told herself sternly.

She started to move forward. Without warning, something gripped her skirt and she was jerked backwards against the door.

CHAPTER XI

A BENEFIT SHOW

Unaware that Kay had recovered her automobile and would drive to Brantwood, Mrs. Tracey and the Worth twins taxied to the railroad station to be on hand when she should arrive. As the passengers alighted from the coaches, they watched eagerly for a glimpse of her.

“All aboard!” shouted the conductor, waving his lantern.

“Oh, the train is pulling out,” cried Wilma, glancing about frantically. “Where is Kay?”

“We must have missed her somehow,” replied Betty.

“I saw every person who left the car,” declared Mrs. Tracey anxiously. “Oh, I am afraid she wasn’t on the train. That’s very strange.”

“It isn’t like Kay to miss a train,” said Wilma as the three walked back slowly to the waiting cab. “Don’t you worry, Mrs. Tracey. I feel sure we’ll find her at home when we get there.”

The twins had intended to take leave of Kay’s mother at the station. Now, observing the woman’s distress,

they accompanied her to the Tracey home. Only one light was burning in the living room and the front door had not been unlocked.

“She hasn’t been here!” Mrs. Tracey exclaimed even before they entered the house. “Oh, I was afraid of it.”

“I guess she must have missed her train,” Wilma admitted reluctantly. “When does the next one come?”

“There isn’t another until morning. That is why I am so worried.”

“Something unusual must have happened,” Betty said slowly. “But it’s queer Kay doesn’t telephone and explain.”

“She may be in serious trouble.”

“Oh, Kay knows how to look after herself in almost any situation,” Wilma declared comfortingly. “We’ll surely hear from her soon.”

The three sat down in the living room to wait. Mrs. Tracey could not keep her eyes from the clock, as the hands crept slowly.

“If only I knew where to reach her I would telephone,” she murmured nervously. “Unless she comes soon——”

“An automobile is turning into the driveway!” cried Wilma who was sitting near the window.

“A taxicab?” cried Mrs. Tracey eagerly.

“I think not.”

“Then it couldn’t be Kay because her car was stolen.”

“But it *is* Kay and she has her own automobile!” exclaimed Wilma, rushing to the door.

Mrs. Tracey and Betty followed as fast as they could, surrounding the automobile before Kay could drive it into the garage.

“Oh, I am so glad you are home safe,” Mrs. Tracey declared in relief. “But we understood you to say your car had been stolen.”

“We worried a lot when you didn’t come on the train,” added Betty, half accusingly.

“I’m sorry about everything,” replied Kay as she alighted. “Let me catch my breath and I’ll try to explain.”

In the living room she related what had happened to the car and how she had located it just before train time.

“But why did it take you so long to get here?” questioned Betty, who guessed that Kay was keeping something back. “You didn’t have a blow-out on the way?”

“No.”

“Then what did happen?”

Kay laughed mysteriously. “Oh, not much of anything.”

Betty gazed at her chum skeptically but did not press the matter at the time. However, she made up her mind that when they were alone she would ask a few questions.

“It is so late, why don’t you girls remain over night with Kay?” invited Mrs. Tracey. “If you wish, I’ll telephone to your mother.”

It was arranged that the twins should spend the night at the Tracey home. No sooner were the three girls in Kay’s room than Wilma and Betty fell upon her, demanding that she tell everything.

“What do you mean, ‘everything’?” countered Kay, searching the bureau for two extra pair of pajamas.

“Oh, don’t pretend,” Betty retorted. “You know very well you are keeping something from us.”

“What would you say if I should tell you I have just received a proposal of marriage?”

Betty sank back on the bed, staring incredulously at her chum.

“You’re joking, Kay!”

“Am I? A very handsome man, too, several years older than myself, with soulful brown eyes and a most ardent manner. He says I must give up my career.”

“Your career!” gasped Wilma. “*What* career?”

“I’m not just sure,” Kay confessed with a laugh.

“Say, are you only teasing us?” demanded Betty suspiciously.

“How can you suggest such a thing?” asked her chum. “It’s the truth that he proposed to me at the Mad Hatter’s Tea Room in Ottenville.”

“Kay, you must have been dreaming,” Betty accused. “You can’t expect us to believe all this really happened, unless—say, you weren’t mistaken for your double again?”

Kay nodded and laughed. “Yes, that was what happened. Oh, I had a very exciting time playing the role of my unknown twin!”

In response to a bombardment of questions, she then gave a serious account of what had occurred in the tea room.

“And you promised to meet him again?” Wilma asked in a disapproving tone.

“Yes, I had to get rid of him quickly and that was the only way I could think of. Anyway, it occurred to me that by talking with him again I might be able to learn something about this double of mine.”

“Maybe he was only playing a part to lead *you* on,” suggested Betty. “I’d be careful if I were you, Kay.”

“Oh, I shall. If only I could learn his name before next Tuesday!”

“What answer will you give him when he repeats his proposal?” inquired Wilma soberly.

“I’ll have to think about that. When the time comes I’ll get out of the situation somehow.”

Wilma shook her head, suggesting by her expression that she thought Kay was walking straight into trouble.

“Have you heard anything from your Cousin Bill?” Betty inquired after a moment.

“Not a word,” Kay answered, her own face becoming serious.

“I think you’re making a mistake not to go to the police,” said Wilma dolefully. “You can’t tell what has occurred. He may have been kidnaped!”

“Oh, Wilma, you take such a gloomy attitude,” protested Betty. “I can’t believe anything like that has happened.”

“Neither can I,” added Kay quickly. She relieved the tension by adding in a cheerful voice, “Do you want to hear a good joke on me?”

“Tell it,” urged Betty.

“It happened at the Huntley mansion. I stopped there again, and I overheard an argument between Monsieur Le Blanc

and his wife. To make a long story short, they caught me. Thinking that I was Jane Barton, they sent me into the house.”

“So that was why you were so late in getting home!” broke in Betty. “Then what happened?”

“I decided to do a little exploring. The house seemed deserted, but I thought Jane Barton might be sleeping upstairs.”

“I thought this was supposed to be a joke,” interrupted Wilma. “It sounds serious to me.”

“I’ve not come to the funny part yet. Well, as I was saying, I stole up the stairway and opened one of the bedroom doors. I thought I heard someone breathing softly but I couldn’t be certain. Then suddenly as I moved forward my skirt was grabbed!”

“Oh, Kay!” Betty gave a convulsive shudder. “Weren’t you frightened half to death?”

“How did you get away?” asked Wilma tensely.

“Oh, it wasn’t very difficult. I merely unhooked the pocket of my dress from the door knob!”

“You mean—it wasn’t anyone?” demanded Betty. “You had just caught your dress?”

“That was all, but I’ll admit I was as shaken as if someone actually had grabbed me! Right then and there

I decided to postpone further investigation. I felt that Mother would be worrying about me, and anyway I was glad to get out of the house before I was caught.”

“Then you didn’t learn whether anyone besides Monsieur Le Blanc and his wife live in the house?” inquired Betty curiously.

“No, I didn’t. Do you think I was foolish not to go on?”

“I think you were rash to go as far as you did,” Wilma replied emphatically. “Be glad you escaped and don’t tempt Fate again.”

“We’ll see,” laughed Kay as she made a flying leap into bed.

The following day the three girls went to school as usual. Scarcely had they entered the building when they were met by one of the members of the dance club.

“Hello,” said Kay casually. “Have you sold any tickets yet for the Children’s Home benefit?”

“No,” the girl answered, “and I guess I shan’t, either. I doubt if anyone will sell any tickets.”

“What do you mean?” Kay asked in astonishment.

“You haven’t heard about Ethel Eaton’s show?”

“Ethel is giving a show?”

“She isn’t taking part in it herself, but she’s selling tickets. It will be held the same night as our benefit.”

“That shouldn’t keep many people away from our show.”

“Ethel has sold a good many tickets already,” the other girl declared. “It is to be a movie at the Rialto with a few acts of dancing as a special attraction. She’s selling the tickets for twenty-five cents.”

“Just half the price of ours!” exclaimed Kay indignantly.

“Yes, and she’s telling everyone that it is a much better show. It’s downright mean!”

“Maybe if we ask her to change the date——”

“She’ll never do it, Kay. I think she set it that way on purpose so it would conflict with our affair. She claims the money is to be turned over to a charitable organization.”

“I’ll talk with her myself,” Kay declared. “Since the performance is a moving picture it easily could be held some other evening.”

The girls found Ethel in the locker room. Accosted by Kay, she readily admitted that she was selling tickets in competition to the performance in which the dance club would take part.

“Ethel, you must have known the date we are to appear,” Kay protested. “Our advertisements have been up for a week.

Why not change your show to a later date so there will be no conflict?"

"Why don't you change yours?" Ethel countered impudently.

"You know we can't. The date was set by the committee for the Children's Home benefit. There will be other acts besides ours."

"Well, all arrangements have been made for my show too. You should see the number of tickets I have sold! Seven this morning."

"Please, Ethel——"

"I can't change the date even if I should want to do it," Ethel broke in as she turned abruptly away. "The manager of the Rialto said he had no other day open."

Kay was thoroughly disgusted at the girl's selfish attitude, but she made up her mind not to give up without a struggle. After school that afternoon she visited the manager of the Rialto Theatre, explaining the situation to him.

"Arrangements were made for the picture through Mr. Eaton," he told her. "I merely set the date which he requested. It can be changed to the following week."

Highly elated, Kay hastened home and telephoned Ethel, reporting the conversation. There was a long moment of silence, then the girl said stiffly:

“Sorry, Kay, but it would be out of the question to change the date now. I’ve sold hundreds of tickets. I never could notify everyone.”

“I’ll be glad to help you.”

“It’s just impossible, that’s all. And I wish you wouldn’t keep bothering me about it!” Ethel hung up the receiver before Kay could say more.

At first members of the dance club did not believe that the moving picture show would offer serious competition, even if the tickets were sold at a lower price than their own. Miss Grover, when told of the situation, refused to be disturbed.

“We must redouble our efforts, that’s all,” she said cheerfully. “If each girl should sell at least twenty, the affair will be a success.”

“Twenty tickets shouldn’t be hard to get rid of,” Betty declared cheerfully. “I know right now where five will go.”

“I’ll start to work just as soon as I get home from school,” announced Kay energetically.

Her first sale was to her mother. Thus encouraged, she decided to visit the neighbors in systematic order. At the first house where she called the lady was not at home. At the next place she was gently but firmly turned down. After stopping at several other places with no better luck, she heard something very upsetting. One woman frankly revealed that she had heard the benefit show would not be very good and she had bought tickets for the movie.

“I’m getting nowhere,” Kay told herself as she walked home slowly. “Two hours wasted and only one ticket sold. It begins to look as if Ethel has not only disposed of a great many tickets, but tried to discredit our performance as well! If she has, then our show will be a dismal failure.”

CHAPTER XII

WANTED—A WITNESS

Kay hoped that other members of the dance club would turn in a more encouraging report on the number of sales, but she learned that deep gloom prevailed among all the girls. Telephoning Betty and Wilma, she was told they had sold only a few tickets, and those to close friends.

“We’re not beaten yet,” Kay said grimly. “The battle is just starting. Let’s try harder than ever, and not even hint to Ethel that we are having a difficult time.”

As she left the telephone, the doorbell rang. Mrs. Tracey answered it. A moment later she admitted into the living room a slightly bald-headed man of early middle age. He was carrying a portfolio.

“Kay, this is Mr. Trout,” said her mother in a significant tone. “He wishes to talk with you.”

“Mr. Trout of the firm of Duster and Trout?”

“Quite right, quite right,” agreed the visitor, firmly shaking the girl’s hand. “I thought you might be running over to see us, but since you didn’t I decided to call. You received our letter?”

“Yes, I did,” Kay answered as she seated herself opposite the lawyer, “and I must say I was deeply puzzled. I have been in no automobile accident.”

The lines about Mr. Trout’s mouth tightened and his eyes became hard.

“My dear young lady,” he said in a patronizing tone, “I realize that your situation is a difficult one, but it will do you no good whatsoever to deny the facts. We have our witnesses. The case is air tight. I therefore advise you, in your own interests, to settle out of court.”

“Just what is your proposition, Mr. Trout?”

“Mr. Craken, our client, is a very nervous man, and I might add a most tolerant one. It is not his desire to become involved in a lawsuit. For this reason he has agreed to accept five thousand dollars to settle the claim.”

“Five thousand dollars!” Kay said, with difficulty keeping her temper under control.

“The claim is ridiculous!” exclaimed Mrs. Tracey. “Even if my daughter had been involved in an accident, your client offered to settle for the damages to the car.”

“At that time Mr. Craken did not realize the extent of injuries to one of his passengers.”

“Your client may have a case against someone, but not against me,” Kay said quietly. “Apparently another girl was mistaken for me.”

“It will get you nowhere to take such an attitude, Miss Tracey. Our case is complete. Will you settle out of court or shall we sue?”

At first Kay had been unable to decide whether or not Mr. Trout was an honorable lawyer, but now she made up her mind that a suave manner shielded a hard and ruthless character. His reluctance to listen to any explanation convinced her that he was determined to push his case regardless of the facts.

“You may do as you please,” she responded coldly. “I’ll not pay you one penny.”

“You are prepared to fight the case?”

“Certainly.” Kay was bluffing now. “I’ll produce witnesses and prove that I wasn’t anywhere near the scene of the crash.”

“You are making a big mistake.”

“I think not,” Kay returned, gaining confidence. “My cousin is a lawyer and he will take charge of the case for me.”

A peculiar expression came over Mr. Trout’s face but neither Mrs. Tracey nor her daughter could fathom a guess as to its significance.

“Very well, if that is your decision,” he replied, arising. “However, I trust you will change your mind before it is too late.”

Bowing to Mrs. Tracey, he picked up his portfolio and left the house.

“Oh, I don’t trust that man at all,” Kay’s mother declared as soon as he had left the porch.

“I feel certain he is dishonest,” the girl agreed. “The idea of demanding five thousand dollars! It fairly makes my blood boil! I’ll fight to the bitter end before I’ll listen to such extortion.”

“That may not be so easy,” said her mother. “You have no witnesses, Kay. Cousin Bill isn’t here. Everything is in such a muddle. We might lose the suit. Then in addition to the damages we would be compelled to pay court costs.”

“I realize that, Mother. Unless I can find at least one reliable witness, I suppose it will be a waste of money to go into court.”

“The women who attended my luncheon would be glad to say that they saw you here at the house during the early afternoon.”

“Yes, but the accident occurred at the time I was out for a walk, or at least that is what they will claim. Oh, if only that tramp who came here the other day could be trusted!”

Sooner than Kay expected, she had an opportunity to test out the tramp’s knowledge of her movements on the day of the accident. The following morning, while at a market with the Worth twins, buying fruit and vegetables for her mother, she suddenly caught sight of the man who had called at her

home. He stood not far away, selecting oranges from a box of marked-down produce. Drawing the attention of her chums to him, Kay said in a whisper:

“There is that same fellow who offered to be a witness for me. Don’t let on that you see him. I’m going to make up a crazy story, and by telling it to you maybe I can learn just how much he really knows about where I was on the day of the auto accident.”

Raising her voice slightly, Kay then began to tell her friends an outlandish tale.

“It’s all so silly, their claim that I was in a smash-up! Why, on the afternoon of the accident I spent nearly four hours at the Zoo. I sat in front of the monkey cage at least an hour. It was just my bad luck that no one saw me there.”

She chatted on glibly, fully aware that the tramp was listening intently. In a few moments he slipped away from the fruit stalls, disappearing into an alley. Kay then abruptly terminated the narrative.

“Just what do you expect to learn from telling such a mess of nonsense?” demanded Betty, deeply puzzled.

“That tramp listened to every word I said. If he really saw me on the day of the accident, he’ll realize it was just a silly story. But if he’s only looking for a chance to earn easy money, then I believe he’ll come to me and repeat the tale as fact.”

“I hope he doesn’t fail you,” said Betty. “But if he should prove to be untrustworthy, what will you do?”

“I just don’t know. Jerry will be my only witness, and he can’t talk. It’s too bad he’s only a dog.”

Wilma smiled as she quoted the first stanza of a poem which came to her mind:

“I’m a lean dog, a keen dog, a wild dog, and lone;
I’m a rough dog, a tough dog, hunting on my own;
I’m a bad dog, a mad dog, teasing silly sheep;
I love to sit and bay the moon, to keep fat souls from
sleep.”

“Oh, Jerry hasn’t any of those vices,” Kay laughed as the girls walked home with their baskets. “He’s an adorable animal and very smart. Every morning he brings in the paper and he’s always amazing me with his new tricks.”

At dinner that same day Kay was not in the least surprised to receive a call from the tramp. Slumping comfortably into the best chair, he asked if she had been thinking over his offer to serve as a witness.

“Yes, but I haven’t made up my mind yet,” replied the girl evasively. “I’m not entirely convinced that you saw me on the day of the accident.”

“Ho! I see you all right, Mees Drazy.”

“Then where was I?”

“I see you at the Zoo. For a long time you stay by the monkey house.”

Kay’s heart sank, for now she knew that the man had not seen her at all. His only interest in the case was to collect some dishonest money.

“I have decided not to use your testimony,” the girl told him a trifle curtly.

The man looked at her as if he could not believe his own ears. He had felt certain she would accept his offer.

“But I hear you say——”

“That’s it exactly,” interrupted Kay. “You did hear me tell my friends I had been at the Zoo, but I was making up the story merely to test you. Now leave at once and don’t annoy me again.”

The crestfallen man arose. Without a word he left the house, glad that the smart young lady had said nothing about arrest.

He had not been gone five minutes when the doorbell rang. Kay arose impatiently from the dining room table, thinking that the tramp might have returned to make another appeal. Her expression quickly altered as the door swung back to reveal not the recent visitor but the young fellow, Binky.

“Maybe I’ve come at an awkward time,” he apologized self-consciously.

“No, not at all. Come right in.”

As Kay led the caller into the living room, Jerry, who had been lying in front of the hearth, scrambled to his feet. The dog growled, then made a rush at the man.

“Jerry!” cried Kay, seizing her pet by the collar. “What is the matter with you? Lie down!”

Only after she had repeated the order several times did the dog obey. Even then he eyed Binky with savage distrust and continued to growl.

“I can’t understand it,” the girl said in bewilderment. “Jerry was never like this before.”

“I guess he remembers how mean I treated you once,” Binky returned, hanging his head.

“Have you had your dinner?” Kay asked to relieve an awkward situation.

“I had a bowl of soup down at the beanery.”

“Then you must have something more here,” the girl insisted.

Mrs. Tracey hastily set a place at the table. Both she and Kay were gratified to see how heartily the young fellow ate.

“I suppose you’re interested in getting that job I promised you,” Kay remarked presently.

“I sure could do with one.”

In truth, Kay had given no thought to Binky's problem for she had never expected that he would come to the house. However, as she now considered the names of various influential business men, it occurred to her that Ronald's father might be able to help.

Excusing herself, she went to the telephone to call Mr. Earle. She was highly elated when he promised to see what he could do for her.

"Send the chap around to my office in the morning," he instructed Kay. "I'll find something for him, although I can't say how much it will pay until after I've talked with him."

When Binky heard the good news his voice became husky. Tears came into his eyes as he tried to express his appreciation.

"I'll earn my pay," he promised, pocketing the address which Kay gave him. "This chance to get back on my feet means a lot to me."

"Mr. Earle is a fine man," said Kay, walking to the door with Binky. "I'm sure you'll enjoy working for him."

"I'd enjoy working for anyone after what I've been through."

Jerry arose from the hearth again, growling low. Binky turned to gaze at the dog.

"Before I was down and out I knew a girl who had a dog almost like yours," he said slowly. "Queer thing too, she

looked enough like you to be your sister. Her name was Jane Barton.”

CHAPTER XIII

A DIFFICULT ROLE

Binky's words proved electrifying to Kay, but she did not disclose that she was excited. Instead she said casually:

"I've been told before that I have a double. Does this girl, Jane Barton, really look very much like me?"

"You're as alike as two peas in a pod, but your voices are different."

"I should like to meet her some time. Does she live in Brantwood?"

"I don't know where she is now," the young man confessed. "A year and a half ago she lived with an old lady and her dog at the same furnished apartment house where I stayed. I guess they must have been pretty poor because rents were low there. How that girl did work! She practiced dancing all the time. Some of the tenants complained about the noise, but I didn't mind."

"The girl lived with her mother, I suppose?"

"I never did hear whether the old lady was a relative or not. The two of 'em always kept to themselves. Then one day the

girl up and disappeared. Next, we didn't see the dog around, and finally the old lady went away.”

“You think something happened to them?” Kay asked in amazement.

“Well, I wouldn't say that,” answered the young fellow. “But when I asked the landlady about 'em, she didn't seem to have any information. A little later I got down on my luck so I pulled out and forgot all about it until I saw you.”

Kay asked Binky a number of questions, making a mental note of the apartment house where he had lived. Although she doubted that she could learn anything at the place regarding Jane Barton, she thought it might be worth a visit if ever an opportunity should arise.

Immediately after school the following day, Kay and her mother called at the Earle home and were delighted to learn that Binky Kemp had been given a job in Mr. Earle's factory. As they were leaving, Ronald drew the girl aside to tell her something he had learned about the Huntleys.

“Yesterday Mother was talking with old Mr. Haynes, who formerly looked after the family's affairs,” he revealed. “It seems that after the Huntleys left here and went abroad they turned all their business over to a foreign lawyer. While they were in France they made new wills.”

“Did you learn to whom they left their estate?”

Ronald shook his head. “Mr. Haynes never was able to get any information. He told Mother he wrote the lawyer a letter

a long while ago, but received no answer.”

“It’s all very interesting,” said Kay.

“Yes, but I’m afraid it doesn’t help solve the mystery. By the way, Kay, have you heard anything more from that Ottenville firm?”

“Not since Mr. Trout came to see me. Do you know, I am driving over to Ottenville tonight.”

Kay regretted her words the instant she had spoken, for Ronald immediately replied:

“I’m not doing anything special. I might take you over.”

“W-e-l-l,” stammered Kay, aware that she was caught in a trap of her own making, “Wilma and Betty plan to go with me. I’m afraid it wouldn’t be much fun for you.”

“No, I’ll not break into the party. But I don’t want you to take risks, Kay. You’re up to some scheme, and it may be a dangerous one.”

“It isn’t dangerous in the least,” Kay laughed.

She was uncertain as to how he would regard the meeting with the strange young man, scheduled for that evening at eight o’clock in the Mad Hatter’s Tea Room. Since giving her promise to the unknown person, Kay had enjoyed no peace of mind. Days earlier she had decided that she dared not face him again, but up to the moment she had no plan which she hoped would solve the difficulty.

By that evening, though, enroute to Ottenville with the Worth twins, she explained what she intended to do.

“I’ll go to the tea room early, and after I have been there five minutes I want you girls to telephone to me. Say I am needed at home. I’ll make that reason my excuse for leaving, but I’ll say I’ll meet the young man there Saturday.”

“You’ll go without even seeing your date?” Betty inquired in surprise.

“Yes, it’s the only safe way,” insisted Kay.

“Why bother to drive over to Ottenville at all?” protested Wilma. “If I were you I’d just forget the whole thing.”

“I want to keep in touch with this stranger, because through him I may be able to trace Jane Barton. If only I could learn his name!”

“Imagine receiving a proposal of marriage from someone you don’t know,” said Betty teasingly.

“And picture the poor fellow sitting there in the tea room, alone and broken-hearted, waiting for a sweetheart who never comes,” added Wilma mischievously. “Can’t you just hear him saying to himself:

“At her fair hands how have I grace entreated
With prayers oft repeated!
Yet still my love is thwarted:
Heart, let her go, for she’ll not be converted—

Say, shall she go?

O no, no, no, no, no!

She is most fair, though she be marble-hearted.”

“Well, what would you girls have me do?” Kay asked with a smile. “Meet him as I agreed and promise to marry him?”

“Your plan is a good one,” Wilma replied seriously. “Betty and I will do anything we can to help carry it through.”

The girls reached the Mad Hatter’s Tea Room at twenty minutes before eight.

“We’re later than I thought we would be,” Kay said uneasily as she parked the automobile across the street from the restaurant. “After I go inside don’t wait very long before telephoning me. My companion may arrive early.”

“We’ll call in exactly five minutes,” promised Betty.

Entering the tea room, Kay gave a quick glance about to be sure that the young man was not there. As she passed the cashier’s desk, the woman, who was inclined to be both inquisitive and romantic, remarked with a knowing smile:

“I guess you’re looking for that handsome beau of yours. He isn’t here yet.”

“I’m not supposed to meet him until eight o’clock,” replied Kay with a self-conscious giggle. “When he comes just tell him I am at the corner table.”

The girl sat down in plain view and ordered dinner.

“Too bad I’ll not be able to eat it,” she thought with regret.
“Everything looks very good.”

The waitress brought Kay’s soup. Scarcely had she touched it when the telephone rang. A moment later Kay was told the call was for her. After a pretended conversation with Betty, Kay turned to the romantic cashier.

“Oh, dear, something has happened. I must leave right away. If my friend comes will you give him a message? Tell him I wouldn’t have left only it’s terribly important. I’ll meet him here Saturday night.”

“I’ll tell him, Miss Tracey.”

“Oh, something more,” Kay added with another giggle.
“Please don’t tell him my name. I’m trying to keep him guessing!”

“That’s the way, dearie,” laughed the woman. “I’ll give him your message.”

Kay hastily joined the Worth twins who were waiting beside the car.

“Now where? Home?” inquired Betty as she slid into the front seat.

Kay shook her head. “I have one more favor to ask. I wish you girls would go into the tea room, order your dinners and wait for the strange man to appear. Find out if the cashier gives him my message. Keep your eyes and ears open, and learn anything you can.”

“We’ve had one grand dinner already,” protested Wilma feebly.

“Another won’t hurt you. I’ll wait here in the car.”

“How long shall we stay if the young man doesn’t come?” inquired Betty as she and Wilma alighted.

“Oh, until you have finished your dinners. But I think he’ll be there all right.”

Kay had not been waiting more than ten minutes when she caught sight of the handsome stranger coming briskly down the street. He did not glance in her direction. After straightening his tie and arranging a handkerchief in his breast pocket, he went into the building. Minutes passed. He did not return.

“Evidently he decided to eat his dinner,” Kay thought, glancing at her wrist watch. “Oh, I wish I dared go in there myself!”

Another ten minutes elapsed. Time had never seemed to pass so slowly. Growing increasingly weary, Kay went into a corner store and bought a newspaper. As she came out again, she glanced carelessly down the street.

Then her heart leaped. Walking swiftly toward her was Mr. Craken!

Holding the newspaper before her face, Kay ducked into the parked automobile. The man did not see her. Crossing the street, he entered the Mad Hatter’s Tea Room.

If Kay had been impatient before, she now was fairly consumed with curiosity. Had the newcomer gone into the Mad Hatter's Tea Room to meet the mysterious young man? It was sheer torture not to know what was happening inside.

“Betty and Wilma probably won't pay any attention to Mr. Craken because they won't recognize him,” she thought miserably. “Oh, dear, if only I dared venture in there!”

A half hour elapsed, during which time Kay scarcely took her eyes from the building. Then suddenly out came Mr. Craken and the strange young man!

CHAPTER XIV

THE TWINS PLAY SLEUTH

Kay was sorely tempted to follow the two men, yet she did not wish to abandon Wilma and Betty. It was possible too that the twins had secured important information which she should know at once. While she was debating what course to take, the girls came out of the building and ran to the car.

“Oh, we’ve learned a lot!” Betty cried excitedly.

“Tell me quickly,” Kay urged, her eyes upon the two men who were disappearing down the street.

“We ought to keep that pair in sight,” advised Wilma. “Start the car, and we’ll tell you everything as we ride.”

Kay nodded. Turning the automobile around in the street, she drove slowly after the two men. Now and then she was forced to pull up at the curb for a moment so that she would not overtake them.

“We did just as you said,” declared Betty, beginning the story. “We sat down at your table and waited. In a few minutes the stranger entered.”

“Did the cashier give him my message?” asked Kay.

“Yes, she repeated it just as you had told her to do.”

“She didn’t reveal my name?” Kay asked anxiously.

“No, the young man seemed to assume that you were Jane Barton, and the woman didn’t set him right.”

“Then what happened?”

“He went over and sat down at the table opposite ours.”

“Wasn’t that luck?”

“Yes, it was,” agreed Betty, her eyes sparkling. “Well, after a while another man came in and sat down at the same table.”

“That was Mr. Craken, the one who claims I wrecked his car.”

“He called your friend by the name of Hal Peterson.”

“What did they talk about?”

“We couldn’t hear much of the conversation,” Betty admitted regretfully. “Mr. Craken did advise the young man to pay up or lose his job.”

“Pay up what, I wonder?”

“Wilma and I couldn’t make a guess.”

“You both did a splendid job of sleuthing,” Kay praised her chums warmly. “I agree that we should follow the two men

and learn some more about them if we can.”

Before the two men had gone another block they paused at a parking ground.

“Well, we’ll talk it over again,” Hal Peterson said in farewell to his companion.

He climbed into his automobile, a black coupe, and drove away. Mr. Craken walked slowly down the street in the opposite direction.

“Now what shall we do?” asked Betty in perplexity. “We can’t follow them both!”

Before Kay could reply, the staccato toot-toot of an automobile horn caused the three girls to glance toward the right.

“Why, it’s Ronald Earle!” exclaimed Betty in astonishment. “What brought him to Ottenville?”

“I can guess,” Kay muttered under her breath. Then she warned quickly, “Don’t you girls dare tell him that I had a date to meet Hal Peterson. I’d have to do too much explaining,” she grinned.

Ronald came over to the car.

“So you decided to join our party after all?” Kay asked with an amused smile.

“It was this way,” explained the young man elaborately. “I was talking with your mother, Kay. She was afraid you might get into trouble. So I offered to drive over and try to keep you out of mischief.”

“You arrived just in time, too.”

Kay did not believe that her mother had been greatly worried, but she pretended to accept the story. Secretly she was highly flattered because Ronald was so interested in her actions. Without taking time to provide many details, she told of the necessity for following the two men.

“Will you help us, Ronald?”

“Of course!”

“Then, Betty, you and Wilma take my car and trail Mr. Craken. Ronald and I will try to overtake Hal Peterson. We’ll have to hurry or we’ll lose him.”

“Where shall we meet?” demanded Betty as she exchanged places with her friend.

“In front of the Mad Hatter’s. If Ronald and I shouldn’t return within a reasonable time, you may as well go home.”

The two cars separated. For a few minutes Kay was afraid that they had lost the black coupe but at the second traffic light they came to she caught a glimpse of it. After that Ronald had no difficulty in following. Within a short time they came to the outskirts of Ottenville.

“It looks as if we’re starting out for a long ride,” Kay remarked uneasily. “How much gasoline have you, Ronald?”

“Enough to take us at least sixty miles,” he replied. “And the longer the ride the better.”

Hal Peterson was a fast driver although not a reckless one. Seldom did the needle of the speedometer drop below fifty miles an hour as Kay and Ronald sought to trail the car ahead. They were beginning to wonder how much longer the chase would last when the young man stopped at a country inn.

“Shall we follow him inside the place?” Ronald asked as he parked the car alongside the black coupe.

“I don’t dare because he would recognize me at a glance,” returned Kay. “But I must learn why he came here. Ronald, would you mind——”

“Going in there alone? Not a bit, only I don’t think I’ll make a very good detective. What am I supposed to learn?”

“Oh, find out if he has a room here or if he came to see someone. Gather any information you can.”

Leaving Kay in the car, Ronald entered the inn. Within ten minutes he was back again, looking very disgruntled.

“No luck?” Kay inquired anxiously.

“Oh, I’m not any good at this detective business. I never know the right questions to ask.”

“Did you see the man, Ronald?”

“Yes. He was at the desk when I entered, talking with the clerk. I heard him ask if there was any mail for Henry Peterson or a telegram from the Dryden Agency.”

“The Dryden Agency,” Kay repeated, determining to remember the name. “Well, that may be worth knowing.”

“The proprietor asked him, ‘How’s business?’ and he answered, ‘I had a good day.’ There’s nothing very significant about that. After the fellow went upstairs to his room, I tried to pump the proprietor, but I didn’t get very far. He told me that Peterson was a ‘nice chap’ and then switched the subject.”

“I hope he didn’t suspect why you were questioning him,” said Kay anxiously.

“I pretended I was inquiring about rates for an aunt of mine. He seemed to accept the story.”

“We’ve learned everything we can, I guess,” Kay remarked after a moment. “Shall we drive back to town and meet the twins?”

“I’m sorry I didn’t do a better job,” the young man remarked again. “I never was cut out for a sleuth.”

“Why, you learned several important facts,” replied his companion. “The case is progressing slowly but surely. The twins may have something worth while to report.”

Returning to Ottenville, Kay and Ronald parked in front of the Mad Hatter’s Tea Room according to the prearranged plan. After waiting three quarters of an hour for the girls, they decided that it would be useless to remain longer. When they arrived at the Tracey home some time later, they were relieved to find that Wilma and Betty were there ahead of them.

“We just about gave you up,” Betty greeted the couple excitedly. “What happened, anyway?”

“We had a little adventure out in the country,” explained Kay. “Mr. Peterson is staying at an inn about ten miles from Ottenville.”

“Wilma and I had a thrilling adventure too,” reported Betty, lowering her voice. “After we left you, Mr. Craken went to his automobile. He drove out of town, stopping at a filling station. While the attendant was putting gas in the car he went into the office and telephoned.”

“Did you hear the conversation?”

“Yes, we did, at least part of it,” Wilma answered triumphantly. “Betty and I walked in boldly, pretending we wanted to buy chocolate bars. He didn’t even notice us.”

“What did he say, Wilma?” Kay questioned eagerly.

“We heard him ask, ‘Maggie?’ Then he said, ‘I’ll be right home.’ There was a little pause before he added, ‘That’s not so good, but keep him there.’”

“You’re certain he said ‘Keep him there?’”

“Oh, yes, Betty and I both heard the words distinctly.”

“Did you follow him after he left the filling station?”

“He went to a small town about five miles away—Creston,” revealed Betty.

“I was under the impression he lived in Ottenville,” said Kay thoughtfully.

“Well, we trailed him to this town. He stopped in the business section and talked for a few minutes with a man he called Lazarre.”

“Lazarre!” exclaimed Kay, startled by the information.

“Madame Le Blanc mentioned him as her brother!”

“He seemed to be a very disagreeable man,” reported Wilma. “We heard him berate Mr. Craken very harshly for not doing some sort of job.”

“What else did you learn?”

“That was all,” Betty answered regretfully. “It was late and we thought we would miss you and Ronald, so we went back to the tea room. After waiting there about twenty minutes we came to Brantwood.”

Kay was highly elated at the information and praised the twins for their fine work. She regretted that her chums had not followed Mr. Craken to his home, but now that she knew the town in which he lived she thought it should be fairly easy to acquire more facts concerning him.

“I have a large number of clues,” she told herself with satisfaction. “My facts do not dovetail as they should, but with a little more information I should be able to solve the auto accident case, and perhaps the mystery of the Huntley mansion as well!”

Kay did not sleep soundly that night, for her mind was busy with the problems which confronted her. The bits of evidence refused to shape themselves into a definite pattern no matter how many times she reviewed them.

“Somehow Mr. Craken, Lazarre, the Le Blancs, that young man Peterson, and my mysterious double, Jane Barton, are all associated,” she reflected. “There must be a key to the situation if only I could find it!”

In the morning Kay awoke with a daring plan worked out in her mind. She would telephone Hal Peterson and pretend that she was the girl with whom he was in love! If he should distrust her voice then indeed all would be lost.

While her mother was occupied in the kitchen, Kay made a long distance call to the inn. Presently she heard a sleepy voice say:

“Hello? Yes, this is Hal Peterson.”

Kay's heart was pounding, but she did not lose her courage.

"I hope I didn't get you out of bed," she said, disguising her tones. "I thought after failing to meet you last night I owed you an apology. You know who this is, don't you?"

"Mary Jane Rue!" the young man exclaimed. "Oh, I'm so glad to hear your voice. I didn't recognize it at first."

Kay became so excited that for an instant she could think of nothing to say. At last she had definitely established the name of her mysterious double! To Hal Peterson, at least, the girl was known not as Jane Barton, but as Mary Jane Rue!

CHAPTER XV

THE DESERTED BOATHOUSE

Having acquired the information she sought, Kay quickly ended the telephone conversation. Fairly beside herself with excitement, she ran to the kitchen where her mother was frying eggs.

“Oh, Mother!” she cried gaily, “I’ve learned the most important fact of all! My double has two names, Jane Barton and Mary Jane Rue! Do you suppose she could be related to that dancer, Trixie Rue?”

“Dear me, how could I guess?” returned Mrs. Tracey. “Aren’t you jumping at conclusions rather swiftly?”

“Yes, but it’s logical, Mother. Oh, this case is really getting to be interesting.”

“It won’t seem so pleasant if we are compelled to pay five thousand dollars to that man Craken.”

“We’ll never pay it, I’m sure of that, Mother. The entire case is beginning to take shape.”

“I can’t make head nor tail of it myself,” confessed Mrs. Tracey. “You speak of so many persons who seem to have no

connection with one another.”

“But they do, Mother! This is the way I sum it up: Mrs. Trixie Rue is Mrs. Huntley’s sister, and there is a possibility that Jane Rue might be her daughter. Then I know that Lazarre, who made money dishonestly, is Madame Le Blanc’s brother.”

“You spoke also of an old lady who lived with Jane Barton.”

“I’m not sure where she fits into the case,” Kay admitted, frowning. “And the dog——”

Her gaze wandered to Jerry, who was curled up by the kitchen stove.

“Mother, I have it!” she exclaimed suddenly. “I know now why he followed me home! It came to me just then in a flash!”

“He?” inquired Mrs. Tracey, who was not a mind reader.

“Jerry. Oh, this may turn out to be the best clue yet!”

“What has Jerry to do with the case, Kay? Really, you are talking in absolute riddles.”

“Binky told me that my double lived with an old lady and a dog. He said that first the girl disappeared, then the dog. I reason it out this way: Jerry ran off to try to find his young mistress!”

“And you believe that he mistook you for her because of the marked resemblance?” Mrs. Tracey asked incredulously.

“No, Jerry would be too smart to make such a mistake. I think he knew the difference, but when he couldn’t find her he decided I was enough like her to be a friend.”

“It’s an interesting theory, Kay.” Mrs. Tracey gazed doubtfully at Jerry, whose ears were cocked as if he were listening to the conversation. “However, it seems a little far-fetched to me.”

“Wait until I find Mary Jane Barton and you’ll see,” laughed Kay. Then the smile faded from her face. “In a way, Mother, I almost hope you are right, because if I prove my theory I’ll lose Jerry! I’ve grown to love that precious animal.”

Kneeling beside the dog, she hugged him and spoke to him affectionately.

“Queer how he always responds when I call him Jerry,” she remarked, half to herself. “Sometimes I wonder if that could be his real name.”

At school that day Kay mentioned her theories to Betty and Wilma, telling them she intended to run down additional clues.

“I plan to drive to the old Huntley place as soon as classes are over,” she disclosed enthusiastically. “Will you girls come with me?”

“Why, we can’t,” Betty protested. “Have you forgotten? We’re having dance club practice again, and if we get through in time we’re supposed to sell tickets.”

“Everyone should work especially hard too,” added Wilma soberly, “because the Benefit threatens to be a complete failure. Ethel Eaton is telling everyone that our show isn’t worth fifty cents.”

“She has acted disgracefully,” agreed Kay, her eyes flashing. “I’ll get rid of my tickets if I have to give them away!”

Her rival’s attitude had provoked nearly everyone in Carmont High, for it was well known that the members of the dance club had worked hard to perfect their specialty numbers. Ethel had gone about in a lordly way, boasting how many tickets she had sold to the movie entertainment, which would be far better than the other show.

Kay wished to help the Children’s Home Benefit in every possible way, but she felt she owed herself a certain duty also. The Craken case might be in court soon. Unless she wished to pay heavy damages, she must produce evidence to prove her innocence. Before deciding what to do she talked over the matter with Miss Grover.

“There is no reason why you can’t be excused from rehearsal this afternoon,” the gymnasium instructor assured her. “You know all the dance steps much better than the other girls, and you’ll not lose out by missing one practice session.”

Her mind thus relieved, Kay hastened home as soon as school was dismissed.

“Mother, are you very, very busy?” she asked, entering the living room.

“Why no, dear.”

“Then I wish you would help me. Our Benefit show will be a failure unless we can sell a large number of tickets. I intended to try again today but I really should run out to the Huntley place. Would you mind calling up a few of your friends and suggesting that our cause is a worthy one?”

“I’d rather walk over hot coals than sell tickets,” sighed Mrs. Tracey as she laid aside her sewing. “But I will do it. It just isn’t right for Ethel Eaton to deprive those unfortunate children of money which is to be spent for playground equipment.”

“You’re a darling, Mother,” Kay said, giving the woman an affectionate squeeze. “I know you’ll be able to sell far more tickets than I could.”

With Jerry as her sole companion, she started for the Huntley mansion. Instead of stopping there, she drove nearly half a mile beyond the homestead to a small village located on the river. Parking her car at a boat dock, she sought the man in charge. With a plan in mind of seeing the Huntley estate from the water, she requested the use of a canoe.

“It will be twenty-five cents an hour,” he told her, removing a paddle from the rack. “Do you want a canoe or a flat

bottom boat?”

“A canoe, please,” Kay replied without stopping to consider the matter. “I have a long distance to paddle, and I’d like to get there quickly.”

“The narrow bottom canoes upset easily,” the man warned her as he dragged a craft into the water. “I suppose you know how to swim?”

“Oh, yes.”

Kay stepped into the canoe, seating herself in the stern. Jerry leaped in after her.

“Taking the dog with you?” the man questioned dubiously.

“I don’t like to leave him shut up in the car.”

“Well, you seem to know how to handle a canoe,” the man returned. “I guess you can manage all right.”

Slowly Kay paddled away from the dock. Before she had taken a dozen strokes she saw that she would have trouble with Jerry. Apparently the dog had never been in a canoe before and the experience was proving to be an exciting one. He would not lie down. Instead he put his front paws on the upper edge of the craft and barked protestingly.

“Oh, Jerry, you’re all right,” Kay told him soothingly. “Lie down before you upset us.”

The dog might have become quiet but at that moment a wild duck alighted on the water a short distance away. Instantly the animal made a dash to the other side of the canoe. The craft wobbled uncertainly, then before Kay could balance it, over it went, spilling its occupants into the water.

“Jerry, for half a cent I’d give you to the dog catcher!” the girl spluttered as she came to the surface. “Of all the mean tricks!”

The river at this point was not deep, so Kay was able to wade ashore and tow the canoe after her. The dog swam along in her wake, not in the least disturbed by what he had done. When they reached the dock, he calmly shook himself and prepared to dry out in the sun.

“You were right about the canoe,” Kay said ruefully to the man who had rented it to her. “With a dog like Jerry along, I need a flat bottom boat.”

“Come into the office,” he invited. “I’ll build a fire and you can dry your clothes.”

Within half an hour Kay was ready to resume her journey down the river. Her clothing was dry again, but limp and wrinkled. In general she presented a very bedraggled appearance.

“Better leave the dog here,” the attendant advised as he launched a rowboat for Kay.

The girl shook her head. “No, I’ll take him along. I think he’ll behave himself this time.”

Jerry seemed to feel that he had done enough mischief for one afternoon. After barking a few times, he settled himself in the bottom of the boat and lost interest in his surroundings.

As the current was fairly swift, it made rowing an easy task. Within a short time Kay caught a glimpse of the Huntley mansion. From the river the grounds looked very imposing even in their ruined state.

The boat slipped quietly from cove to cove, protected from view by tall bushes and willow trees which lined the banks of the stream. Slowly Kay drifted past the sunken garden. Some distance beyond she caught sight of an old boathouse which she had never noticed before. Once it had been a well built structure, but now it was fast falling into ruin.

Resting on her oars, Kay studied the building with interest. It had been designed to harmonize with the pagoda tea house and the Japanese bridge. Windows on the upper story had been broken, and several were stuffed with old rags.

“Someone must have lived in there in recent years,” Kay thought in surprise.

She let the boat float nearer. Jerry, standing up, gave a little bark.

“Now don’t become excited again,” Kay said, reaching over to pat the animal. “If you start making a fuss, the Le Blancs will learn that we are here!”

Paying no attention to her words, the dog barked louder than before. Kay noticed that he kept turning his head toward the

boathouse as if something in that direction had excited him.

“What do you see, Jerry?”

At first the girl could notice nothing amiss anywhere. Then as she listened intently she thought she heard a low moaning sound.

Quickly she steered her craft into a cove and made it fast to a willow tree. Jerry leaped out. Before his mistress could stop him he ran to the boathouse. Barking excitedly, he scratched against the front door with his paws.

“That moaning sound did come from there,” Kay thought as she hurried toward the animal. “Someone must be in trouble!”

CHAPTER XVI

A WOMAN OF MYSTERY

Reaching the boathouse, Kay quieted Jerry, then rapped on the door. There was no response. Now even the moaning sound had died away.

“I am sure someone must be here,” she told herself.
“Otherwise Jerry wouldn’t act as he does.”

After knocking several times, Kay tested the door and found it locked. She turned away, only to pause as the dog began to bark again. He would scratch on the door, then gaze at his mistress with pleading eyes.

“He doesn’t want me to leave,” the girl thought. “He’s trying his best to tell me that someone is inside the place.”

As she walked slowly around the boathouse, she found three windows on the lower floor, all of them shoulder height. From the river bank Kay brought an old tree stump, placed it under one of the windows, and mounted it. In this way she was able to raise the sash. As she scrambled through, Jerry set up such a protest that she was afraid he would disturb the Le Blancs. Quickly she unfastened the door and let him into the boathouse.

Without hesitation the animal bounded up the stairway which led to the living quarters on the second floor. Kay followed as fast as she could.

On the top step she paused, dumbfounded at a sight which she beheld. An emaciated woman of middle age lay on a cot. Her eyes closed, she seemed to be in a stupor. Beside her sat Jerry, gazing worshipfully upon her face, his tongue gently licking the thin, white hand which hung limply over the bedside.

The woman aroused slightly and tried to pat the dog. Her eyelids fluttered open. With an effort she whispered:

“You’ve come back at last. I thought they had killed you.”

The hand fell back on the faded coverlet. Again the woman seemed to lapse into unconsciousness.

Kay moved swiftly to the bedside. She was shocked at the thin, haggard appearance of the woman for it was easy to see that hunger and pain had ravaged a face which once had been beautiful.

“Who can she be?” the girl asked herself in perplexity. “Jerry must be her dog, yet if he is, my theory that he belongs to Jane Barton is shattered.”

Kay glanced appraisingly about the room. Save for the cot, a cheap dresser, a table and two chairs, there was no furniture. Heat had been provided by a small stove, but now all the wood was gone. Peering into a cupboard, she found an empty coffee can and two slices of moldy bread; nothing more.

“The woman is half starved,” Kay thought, returning to the bedside. “I wonder if the Le Blancs know that she is living here?”

Recalling the basket of food which she had found in the pagoda tea house, the girl decided that someone residing in the household must be aware of the woman’s presence, and had made an effort to help her. Could that person have been Jane Barton?

After staring at the woman for a moment, Kay moved to the window and raised it to admit fresh air. From the direction of the Huntley mansion she could hear the sound of piano music.

“The Le Blancs are having a rehearsal,” she reflected. “Perhaps while they are occupied, I could slip into the house and get a little food for this poor woman.”

Second thought convinced Kay that the plan would be too dangerous. It would be much wiser to take the boat and row to a nearby house, even if the food could not be obtained as quickly.

Locking Jerry into the boathouse, she walked first toward the garden. It was just possible that a basket of food might have been left in the pagoda. Cautiously she entered the summer house. No one was about to observe her movements.

One glance assured her that the pagoda was empty, so again she descended the terraces to the river’s edge. Recalling that she had noticed a house a short distance up stream, she

rowed there. Under a pretext she obtained a can of soup from the negro cook. As Kay carried the food back to the boathouse, it was growing dusk.

Gathering wood, she built a little fire in the stove and heated the soup. When she carried the steaming broth to the bedside, the woman stirred and her eyelids fluttered open.

“Why did you leave me so long?” she mumbled fretfully. Her eyes were very blue and deadened with pain.

Kay set down the bowl of soup on the table, and raised the patient to a sitting position. Carefully she supported her with pillows.

Dared she make a reply which would lead the woman to reveal more? It was fairly obvious that she had been mistaken for another person. Yes, she would attempt it.

“They tried to make me tell everything, but I refused,” she said, pressing a spoonful of soup to the woman’s lips.

The words seemed to make no impression upon the half-stupefied mind. Kay waited a moment, then added:

“You must not stay here another day. You are very ill.”

“You know I must remain, my child. And remember, no one must see me. You will not betray my secret?”

“No, it is quite safe with me,” Kay replied soothingly.

After taking less than half the soup, the woman refused more. Falling back against the pillows, she dropped into a deep slumber.

“She may sleep for hours,” Kay thought in perplexity. “It is getting late, and if I don’t return home Mother will be worried.”

Although she did not like to leave the woman alone, she realized she could do very little good by remaining. Deciding to return to Brantwood for help, she started down the stairway.

“Come, Jerry,” she called.

The dog whined but refused to obey, even when Kay went back for him. Taking him by the collar, she attempted to lead the animal toward the stairway. He braced his feet and pulled away from her.

“Perhaps it’s just as well that you stay here,” she said aloud. “Guard your mistress until I come back, Jerry.”

Letting herself out of the boathouse, Kay returned to the nearby cove. As she rowed up stream, she pondered upon the identity of the mysterious woman, wondering if she might be Jane Barton’s old lady companion whom Binky had mentioned.

“The woman isn’t really old,” she corrected herself. “I’ll bet she’s not a day over forty-five. If she were well, and her face filled out, she might be rather attractive again.”

Suddenly a startling thought came into Kay's mind. The woman might be Jane Barton's mother, Trixie Rue!

"And perhaps she is the same person I saw dancing in the garden!" Kay reflected, becoming excited at the possibilities of her theory. "Mrs. Cary told me that the woman was a professional dancer."

Although it was getting late, the girl did not wish to return home without making an attempt to establish the identity of the mysterious woman. If only she could induce Mrs. Cary to come back with her and see the person in the boathouse!

Upon reaching the dock, Kay asked the man in charge if she might use his telephone. Calling her mother, she explained that she would not be home for some time. She then inquired of the boatman how long his rental place would remain open.

"Please reserve a boat for me," Kay instructed as she hurried to her car. "I expect to be back again within an hour."

The attendant gave her a queer look, but offered no comment. Obviously he thought that she was acting in a very flighty manner.

Kay drove at once to Mrs. Cary's cottage at the outskirts of Brantwood. She found the old lady hobbling about the kitchen, trying to prepare her supper.

"Well, well, this is a nice surprise," the woman said cordially. "You are just in time to have a cup of tea with me."

“No, I can’t stay,” Kay returned hastily. “I came to ask a favor.”

“I’ll be glad to do anything I can for you. Is it sewing——”

“Nothing that easy, I fear. Would you be able to travel in a car and perhaps a boat?”

“A boat! You mean a steamship?”

“No, just a plain rowboat,” Kay replied with a smile. “If you are able to make the trip, I should like to take you to the Huntley mansion—or rather to the boathouse on the grounds.”

“But why should I go there?” Mrs. Cary asked in perplexity. “I’m feeling better than I did, but I haven’t been out of the house in two weeks.”

“I shouldn’t make the request, only this is an emergency.”

“What is wrong at the Huntley place?”

“Do you remember telling me about a woman named Trixie Rue?”

“Yes, yes, of course!” Mrs. Cary said eagerly. “You’ve not heard more about her?”

“I think I may have seen the woman this afternoon. Anyway, I visited the Huntley boathouse and found a poor creature living there. She is in a dreadful condition; ill and half starved.”

“And you think she may be Trixie Rue!”

“Yes, the woman looks as if she might have been very beautiful at one time. I should say she is about forty-five years of age.”

“Trixie Rue would be forty-six her next birthday,” Mrs. Cary murmured. “But I can’t believe it! Mrs. Huntley’s sister starving—living in a boathouse!”

“I may be mistaken, of course,” admitted Kay, “for I never saw Trixie Rue nor even a picture of her. That is why I wish you could come with me and identify her. You would know the woman if you should see her again?”

“I’m sure I should, even if she has changed a great deal. If you will help me, I’ll prepare a basket of food to take to the boathouse.”

“Do you feel able to make the trip?” Kay asked anxiously.

Mrs. Cary hesitated, then said with determination:

“It will be an ordeal, but nothing could keep me from going. If Trixie Rue is ill and in trouble my place is at her bedside. We will start at once.”

CHAPTER XVII

OLD FRIENDS

Mrs. Cary packed a basket of food, and gathered up several blankets which she knew would be useful in the damp, chilly boathouse. The journey back to the river's edge was a tedious one, for Kay drove slowly in order to spare the old lady unnecessary jolting. Even so the woman looked very tired by the time they reached the dock.

"How are you feeling?" Kay inquired as she helped her passenger from the car.

"A little tuckered out," Mrs. Cary admitted. "But don't you worry about me. I'll make it all right."

The dockman gazed askance at Kay as she came to his shack to tell him that she was starting out again on the river. Noticing the lunch basket he decided she probably was going to attend an evening picnic somewhere along the shore.

"It's a pretty dark night to be in a boat," he said discouragingly. "Taking the old lady along with you?"

"Yes, but we'll not be gone long. I'll pay you for two hours' use of it in advance."

Pocketing the money, the man shrugged, and said no more. After Kay helped Mrs. Cary into the boat, she wrapped a blanket about her to make her as comfortable as possible.

“My, but it is dark tonight,” the old lady shuddered, staring down into the swirling waters.

“Later on I think we may have a moon,” said Kay.

“Are you a good hand at rowing?”

“Yes, you may trust me, Mrs. Cary,” the girl said reassuringly. “This boat is a very sturdy one, too.”

“That’s good,” the old lady replied, although even then she did not relax. “I hope it doesn’t leak.”

“Not a drop,” laughed Kay.

As the girl rowed downstream, Mrs. Cary sat tense and frightened, staring straight before her. After the first few minutes she did not speak. Kay was kept busy, for the swift current made the craft swing around time and again. Presently, as they approached the Huntley place, she noticed twinkling lights in the mansion windows. She pointed them out to her companion.

“It seems strange to find anyone living here after all these years,” the woman said moodily.

“It will be better if we aren’t seen,” Kay cautioned, lowering her voice. “I’ll try to row directly up to the boathouse. If I

can get the big doors open we'll float inside."

She was able to maneuver into position. To her delight the doors rolled upward when she tugged at them.

"Isn't that someone coming this way?" Mrs. Cary whispered suddenly.

As Kay turned her head, she caught a glimpse of a tall, lean figure moving swiftly toward the boathouse from the direction of the sunken garden. Although she was unable to see the man's face plainly she felt certain he must be Monsieur Le Blanc.

"I wonder if he heard us?" she thought tensely. "I don't see how he could have, but he's certainly making straight for this spot."

Before Kay could swing the boat under the shed, the quiet of the night was broken by the muffled barking of a dog. The sound came from the upper floor of the boathouse. With a sinking heart the girl realized that Jerry had heard the approaching man and was trying to give an alarm!

"Now we will be caught," she thought in despair.

Monsieur Le Blanc, for indeed it was he, stopped short to listen. Then he gave an exclamation of anger and impatience:

"There iss zat dog again! Never will I haff any peaze here. If I lay hands on him I drown him in ze river, *oui!*"

Satisfied that the dancing master had not traced the barking to the upper floor of the boathouse, Kay pulled the craft under the shelter of the building. She dared not lower the doors lest the sound betray her, but she felt fairly safe so far. If only she could quiet Jerry before he ruined all her plans!

“Mrs. Cary, wait here,” she whispered as she leaped out of the boat and made it fast. “I’ll be right back.”

Darting up the stairway she whistled softly to attract Jerry’s attention. For an instant the dog stopped barking, then began again, louder than before.

“Quiet, Jerry!” she ordered sternly, grasping him by the collar.

Even then the animal would not obey. In desperation Kay covered his mouth with her skirt to smother the sounds. Jerry struggled violently to free himself, but she held on grimly.

Suddenly Monsieur Le Blanc pounded on the door of the boathouse. Kay held her breath.

“Iss anyone zere?” he shouted loudly.

Kay tightened her hold upon Jerry. If he should bark now all would be lost!

After a few minutes she heard Monsieur go away, muttering to himself. Still holding the dog, Kay moved to the window and watched until she saw the man disappear beyond the trees.

“Who is it?” asked the woman who was lying in darkness on the cot. “Who is there?”

“A friend,” replied Kay softly. “Don’t be alarmed. In just a moment we’ll have a light.”

“Pull down the shades first, please. They must not know I am here.”

From the clear tone of voice Kay made up her mind that the woman’s condition was improved greatly. She longed to ask her many questions, but recalling that Mrs. Cary was waiting patiently in the boat, Kay slipped quietly downstairs.

“Is it safe now?” the old lady whispered nervously.

“Yes, Monsieur Le Blanc has gone back to the house. We’ll be all right if Jerry doesn’t start barking again.”

Taking Mrs. Cary’s hand, Kay led the woman up the creaking stairway.

“I have brought someone to see you,” she said soothingly to the woman on the bed. “Just a minute until I get a light.”

“There is one candle left. You will find it on the top shelf of the cupboard.”

After lowering the blinds, Kay lighted the candle and placed it on the table. Mrs. Cary bent over the woman on the cot. For several moments she stared but spoke no word. Then a little sob broke from her lips.

“Trixie—Trixie Rue!”

The patient stirred, trying to raise herself on an elbow.

“Is—it—Mrs. Cary?” she asked in disbelief.

“Yes, yes, you remember me?”

“It was so—long ago,” the woman muttered, sinking back on the pillow again. “So much has happened.”

“What have they done to you, Trixie?”

“The world has battered my wings,” the former dancer answered with a sad smile. “You—you shouldn’t have come here, Mrs. Cary. It may get you into trouble.”

“Fiddlesticks!” snapped the old lady. “Now just set your mind at rest, Trixie Rue. From now on I’ll be your nurse.”

Filled with secret jubilation that the missing dancer had been found, Kay set about unpacking the lunch basket. She brought a dish of custard to the bedside, watching while Mrs. Cary fed it to the woman.

“Now we don’t dare give you too much at first, Trixie,” the old lady said anxiously. “I can tell it’s been a long while since you’ve had a good, square meal.”

“So many days I can’t remember,” the dancer murmured, as a stray tear trickled down her furrowed cheek. “Oh, it’s wonderful to be with friends again.”

“You never should have run away from your trouble, Trixie.”

“I know,” the woman acknowledged, turning her head away.

Presently she ate a little more food and gazed at Kay with new interest.

“Who are you?” she asked wonderingly. “Weren’t you here earlier this afternoon?”

“Yes, I think you mistook me for another person. My name is Kay Tracey.”

“I did become confused,” the woman admitted. “You look so much like my own darling Mary Jane.”

“Your daughter?” Kay asked quickly. “Jane Barton?”

“Yes, my daughter. She has had such a difficult time—all my fault—oh, why was I born anyway?”

Burying her face in the pillow, the woman gave way to tears. Kay realized that the patient was in no condition to be questioned. The girl must wait until Trixie Rue should be stronger before trying to learn her story.

Presently the dancer dropped into a peaceful sleep. Kay then drew Mrs. Cary aside to ask her opinion as to what should be done.

“We must get Trixie away from here,” the old lady declared promptly. “This boathouse isn’t a suitable place for a sick person.”

“No, it is too damp and cold. Besides, Monsieur Le Blanc might take it into his head to investigate at any time.”

“We ought to get her away from here tonight,” insisted Mr. Cary.

“The point is, where can we take her? Not to a hospital. We’d have to answer too many questions!”

“She’ll come to my cottage, of course,” the old lady announced firmly.

“Will you be able to take care of her? You’ve not been very well yourself——”

“I’m getting better every day,” Mrs. Cary said spiritedly. “I’ll be able to look after her all right.”

“Then the next thing to do is convince the woman she must leave here. That may not be easy.”

When Trixie Rue awakened a few minutes later, the matter was presented to her. She listened thoughtfully and offered only one objection to the plan.

“If I leave here Mary Jane will not know where to find me again.”

“Your daughter has been living in the Huntley mansion?” questioned Kay alertly.

“Yes, she often brought me baskets of food from there. The Le Blancs did not know about it. One day she left

a basket for me in the pagoda, and another girl tried to take it. I had to slip up in the dark and jerk it away.”

Kay smiled but did not reveal the fact that she had been the unknown person in the tea house. Aloud she said:

“Perhaps we can get word to your daughter where we are taking you.”

Trixie Rue shook her head. “Mary Jane must have been made to go away. If she were still here she would have come to her poor mother.”

“If your daughter has gone, I can’t see any possible reason for you to remain here,” interposed Mrs. Cary. “You will be more comfortable at my cottage.”

“I’ll try to locate Mary Jane,” Kay promised quickly.

“In that case, I’ll be glad to go,” said the former dancer. “It is dark and no one will see me.”

After Mrs. Cary and Kay had helped the woman to dress, they assisted her downstairs to the boat. Jerry leaped in before they shoved off, settling himself comfortably at the feet of his mistress.

The boat rode so low in the water Kay found it hard work rowing. Her arms and back ached by the time they reached the dock. She hurried Trixie Rue and Mrs. Cary to the car before the dockman had an opportunity to ask any questions.

“I hope he didn’t see me,” the dancer said nervously as Kay drove toward the Cary cottage. “If anyone should recognize me, it might mean a jail sentence.”

“Why did you ever run away in the first place, Trixie?” Mrs. Cary inquired in a kind voice.

“It is a long story, and I am so tired. Tomorrow I will tell you everything.”

During the remainder of the journey to the cottage, the dancer did not speak. She leaned her head against Mrs. Cary’s shoulder and appeared to doze.

Arriving at the cottage, Kay helped make Trixie Rue comfortable in the guest room. Secretly she was a little amused at the remarkable change in Mrs. Cary’s attitude toward her own ailments. In this emergency the old lady had forgotten about her invalidism, and rather resented any suggestion that she might be overtaxing her strength.

“Don’t you worry a mite about me,” she assured Kay when the girl was ready to leave. “Trixie and I will get along fine.”

“If you need anything let me know, Mrs. Cary. I’ll come back some time tomorrow.”

Leaving Jerry at the cottage, Kay drove to her own home. The hour was late, she was hungry and very tired; yet she felt that from every standpoint the evening had been a successful one. Not only had she aided the unfortunate Trixie Rue, but she had gained useful information regarding her double.

“When the woman is able to tell her story I shall learn a great deal more, too,” she told herself triumphantly. “I only hope it doesn’t develop that Mary Jane Barton is implicated in a dishonest scheme!”

As Kay approached the Tracey house, she saw a strange automobile drive away from the door. Wondering who the visitor might have been, she drove into the garage and hurried to the house.

“Is that you, Kay?” called her mother from the living room.

“Yes, Mother. Did you have a caller?”

Mrs. Tracey waited until her daughter had reached the living room before she replied.

“Mr. Trout was here again,” she revealed in an agitated voice. “He insists we pay damages at once or he will bring the case to trial without further delay.”

CHAPTER XVIII

ALARMING DEVELOPMENTS

“Please tell me everything Mr. Trout had to say,” Kay pleaded, sitting down beside her mother on a sofa.

“He was very disagreeable and threatening. Not at all like he was the other day.”

“I suspected then that his smooth, polite manner was a pose,” Kay remarked grimly. “What is his latest proposition?”

“He said if we would settle at once his client would accept three thousand dollars instead of five. Oh, I am dreadfully worried, Kay.”

Mrs. Tracey arose and nervously paced the floor. Kay went to her, slipping an arm about the woman’s shoulders.

“Cheer up, Mother,” she said lightly. “I don’t see any cause for worry. We’ve already saved two thousand dollars by delaying, and if we wait a while longer I think we’ll save every penny!”

“Oh, it isn’t the money which worries me, although we can’t afford to lose it.”

“Then what is wrong, Mother?”

Mrs. Tracey hesitated, then said reluctantly, “I am worried about you, Kay.”

“About *me*?”

“Mr. Trout did not make any direct threats—he was too clever for that—but he hinted something might happen to you if we didn’t pay.”

“He suggested I would be kidnaped?”

“I think he meant to imply just that. Oh, if only Bill were here I shouldn’t be so uneasy.”

Kay was silent as she reflected upon the new turn which the case had taken. Furthermore, she could not understand why no word had been received from her Cousin Bill. It was not like him to stay away without letting either his relatives or his office know where he was. Oh, how she hoped nothing had happened to him! But she must not let her mother read her thoughts.

“I’m afraid it isn’t a bluff, Kay.”

Mrs. Tracey spoke so seriously that Kay glanced at her in surprise.

“Mother, you’re not keeping anything from me, are you?”

Mrs. Tracey did not answer.

“You *are* hiding something from me! I can tell by the way you act.”

“I hadn’t intended to worry you,” Mrs. Tracey said slowly, “but I suppose you really should know. For the past two days I have seen a stranger strolling up and down in front of the house.”

“You believe he is watching the place?”

“Yes, Kay, I do. Sometimes he stands across the street and at other times he stations himself in the alley.”

“It couldn’t be Mr. Craken?” Kay asked thoughtfully.

“No, I would recognize him. This man is poorly dressed and I imagine may be a hired ‘watcher’. But now you understand why I feel uneasy.”

“I’ll be very cautious from now on, Mother,” Kay promised, giving the woman a hug. “But it seems to me you may be in more danger than I. You are here alone so many hours of the day.”

“Now don’t start worrying about me,” laughed Mrs. Tracey. “No doubt I make too much of the incident. By the way, aren’t you going to ask me how many Benefit tickets I sold this afternoon?”

“Did you do well?” Kay questioned eagerly.

“Ten ladies promised me they will take tickets if you will call at their homes. I could have sold more only it seems Ethel

Eaton has combed the town.”

“Everywhere she goes, she spreads the word that our show is no good,” Kay said bitterly. “It’s very unfair of her.”

“If I have a little spare time tomorrow, I’ll try again,” Mrs. Tracey offered.

After thanking her mother for the help, Kay ate a belated supper, then went to bed. She did not sleep well. Once, fancying that she heard footsteps on the gravel driveway, she went to the window to look outside. She could see no one, yet she sensed that a person had been prowling about the premises.

“If Cousin Bill were home he would take means to protect Mother,” she thought. “I should do the same.”

Before she dropped off to sleep Kay resolved that in the morning she would talk with Ronald’s father to see if together they could work out a plan. Accordingly she left school at noon and called at the factory building. Mr. Earle, who had just returned from lunch, escorted her into his private office.

“Well, well,” he said jovially, offering her a chair, “aren’t you playing hookey from school?”

“With the permission of my teachers. I shouldn’t have bothered you only I wanted to talk to you about a rather important matter.”

“What may I do for you, Kay?”

“First, I should like to ask about Binky Kemp. Is he proving to be a good worker?”

“Exceptionally so, according to the report of my foreman. If you know of another young man like him, send him around.”

“I was thinking of taking him away from you,” Kay said with a smile.

She then told Mr. Earle about the mysterious person who had been observed watching the Tracey house. Didn't he think the prowler in turn should be watched?

“A watchman to watch the watcher, eh?” chuckled the manufacturer.

“Yes, that would be the general idea, Mr. Earle. Could you spare Binky from his work here?”

“You may have him if you like, Kay. I believe he will prove dependable too, but I shouldn't trust him completely. You were not intending to take him into the household?”

“Oh, no, I agree that it would be unwise considering how little we know about him.”

“I'll call the young man now and have him talk with you.”

In a few minutes Binky appeared at the office. He was wearing a clean suit, his hair was well combed, and there was a different look about his face which the girl noted at once.

“Did you send for me, Mr. Earle?” he asked politely. “I—I hope my work has been all right.”

“Entirely satisfactory. Sit down, Binky. Miss Tracey wishes to talk with you.”

Not until then did the young man notice Kay, who sat in a shadow. His face brightened as he turned toward her. Without providing many details, she explained what she wanted him to do.

“I can’t pay more than fifteen dollars a week,” she finished regretfully. “Nor can I promise how long the work will last.”

“As far as your job here is concerned,” spoke Mr. Earle, “you may have it back again whenever you wish.”

“I’ll be glad to work for you, Miss Tracey,” Binky said without an instant’s hesitation. “I’m not forgetting how much you’ve done for me.”

“Then everything is settled,” said the girl. “As soon as you are free, Binky, you may take up your new duties.”

After thanking Mr. Earle for his cooperation, Kay left the office. Upon reaching home later she did not tell her mother what she had done, realizing that it might increase the woman’s anxiety. She would pay Binky’s salary from her own savings account.

“Aren’t you home from school early?” Mrs. Tracey said as the girl entered the living room.

“I asked to be excused at noon, Mother. Let’s go together to Mrs. Cary’s and talk with Trixie Rue. If only she will tell her story, everything may be cleared up.”

Mrs. Tracey packed a basket of delicacies for the sick woman. Before Kay backed out the car, she picked a large bouquet of garden flowers. Shortly after two o’clock the Traceys arrived at the cottage.

Trixie Rue, looking much stronger than upon the previous day, was sitting up in bed. She smiled at Kay, but responded somewhat diffidently to Mrs. Tracey’s greeting.

“Mother will tell no one that you are staying here,” Kay reassured the woman.

Even then Trixie Rue did not relax entirely. She seemed unwilling to talk about herself, despite her promise of the evening before. When she offered no information regarding her past, Kay switched the conversation to Mary Jane. The former dancer’s face brightened and she began to speak more freely.

“Mary Jane is such a good, loyal daughter. All her life she has tried so hard to help me. Her high courage has carried me on. We were practically down and out when she saw Monsieur Le Blanc’s advertisement in the paper.”

“What advertisement was that?” Kay inquired, trying not to appear too eager.

“Monsieur is a dancing master,” explained the woman. “He is training girls for a show, and has rehearsals at

the Huntley mansion. Mary Jane was one of twenty chosen.”

“She must be very talented,” observed Mrs. Tracey with interest.

“Indeed, she is. I started training Mary Jane when she was four years of age. Monsieur Le Blanc’s show isn’t good enough for her, but nothing else offered, and we were desperate.”

“Does he pay his girls well?” Kay asked curiously.

“So far Mary Jane has received nothing except her room and board.”

“Then she lives at the Huntley mansion?”

“She did stay there, but I don’t know where they have taken her now. You see, Monsieur Le Blanc keeps his dancers in strict training, supervising their diet and sleeping habits. He overdoes it, in my estimation.”

“The man seems to have very pronounced ideas about everything,” Kay remarked dryly.

“Yes, he is a hard task master. I’m sorry Mary Jane had to work for him. He would not allow her to keep Jerry. The dog stayed with me for a few days, then ran away to try to find Mary Jane. I did not see him again until yesterday at the boathouse.”

By this time Kay was convinced that Trixie Rue was none other than the “old lady” whom Binky Kemp had seen living

with Mary Jane at the city apartment. Undoubtedly she had made herself up to look older than she was so as to avoid recognition. Her theory was confirmed as the woman went on with her story.

“Mary Jane and I had been living in a fairly comfortable apartment house, but I could not pay the rent. After my daughter went to the Huntley place, she sent for me. I lived in the boathouse without Monsieur Le Blanc’s knowledge. At night Mary Jane would smuggle food to me. Then something went wrong. My daughter ceased to come, and I became ill.”

“You believe that the man took his dancing girls to another place?”

“I don’t know what to think. I am sure Mary Jane would come to me if she were free to do so. Oh, please, won’t you try to locate her for me?”

“I’ll do anything I can,” Kay promised instantly. “Has your daughter any friends who might know of her whereabouts—a young man, perhaps?”

“There is no one, to my knowledge.”

It was evident to Kay that Trixie Rue knew nothing of Hal Peterson or the recent auto mishap. For the time being she decided not to speak of the matter.

“Possibly Jerry could help find your daughter,” she said, her gaze roving toward the dog. “May I borrow him for a day or two?”

“Certainly. Jerry will go with you if I tell him he is to obey you.”

“Have you any clothing which belonged to your daughter? A scarf or a handkerchief?”

“I have a glove in my purse. You will find it lying on the bureau.”

Kay obtained the glove. After talking a few minutes longer with Trixie Rue, she returned home with her mother.

“I must make the most of this day,” she declared as Mrs. Tracey alighted at the door. “If you can spare the car, I’ll take Jerry and drive out to the Huntley estate. I may be able to learn something about Mary Jane.”

At the mansion Kay rapped several times on the door. She could hear persons moving around inside the house, but no one came to admit her. Refusing to be discouraged, she parked the car some distance away, then entered the grounds from the direction of the river.

Hiding herself in the sunken garden, she prepared to wait. Hours elapsed and Kay grew very weary of her vigil. Jerry became so restless it was difficult to keep him quiet.

With the coming of night it grew cold and chilly in the garden. Kay shivered, and considered abandoning her post. She saw little hope of getting inside the mansion.

As she started to move away, the side door suddenly opened. Monsieur Le Blanc and his wife came into the garden. They failed to fasten the door behind them, an oversight which the girl instantly noted.

“Now is our chance, Jerry,” she whispered in the animal’s ear.

Leading the dog by the collar, she stole to the door. Opening it softly she slipped into the house.

CHAPTER XIX

THE LOCKED DOOR

Kay cherished scant hope that she would find Mary Jane in the Huntley mansion, but it was her intention to make sure of this before beginning her search elsewhere.

The lower floor of the house was dark. There was no indication that anyone was about. Taking Mary Jane's glove from her pocket, Kay dropped it at Jerry's feet. The dog sniffed at it and whined.

"Now find her!" Kay ordered, giving him an encouraging pat. "Find Mary Jane!"

With his nose close to the floor, the dog made little zig-zag patterns, rushing first in one direction and then in another. Each imaginary trail seemed to end about where it started. Finally Jerry stopped at Kay's feet, looking up at her as if to say:

"This is a puzzler. Let me smell that glove again!"

Kay knelt down and held the article close to the dog's nose.

"It's Mary Jane's, Jerry. Go find her!" she repeated.

This time the dog had better success. After a few fruitless efforts, he finally trotted over to a closed door on the first floor and gave several expressive sniffs.

“So you think you’ve found something interesting, do you?” Kay whispered as her hand reached for the knob. “Let’s hope you’re right.”

Cautiously she opened the door and peered inside. Before her was a large, empty rehearsal room with mirrors lining the walls. Moonlight flooding in one of the leaded windows disclosed a large old fashioned piano and a few sheets of music scattered over the floor.

“Try again, Jerry,” Kay urged, leading the dog out into the hallway. “Mary Jane may have been here but she is gone now.”

The animal acted as if he were a little mystified himself. Kay led him through the hall into the deserted dining room. Here again she refreshed his memory by letting him sniff Mary Jane’s glove.

This time Jerry ran to the foot of the stairway, going over every inch of the first step. Suddenly he placed both front feet on it and gazed up the stairway as if he were holding a secret debate with himself.

“So you think she is up there?” Kay murmured. “Well, let’s try it.”

She followed close behind as the dog bounded up the steps. In the upper hallway Jerry paused at each bedroom door and

sniffed in a rather unconvincing fashion as if he were following a very cold trail.

“Can’t you find her?” Kay whispered in disappointment. “Well, I was afraid she wouldn’t be here.”

On the lower floor the outside kitchen door suddenly banged shut. Kay grasped the dog by his collar and flattened herself against the wall.

The sound of footsteps reached her ears as someone walked about the lower floor. Her heart began to beat faster as she deduced that the person was a woman who wore high heeled shoes; in all likelihood she was Madame Le Blanc.

Suddenly a creaking noise warned Kay that the person was climbing the stairway to the second floor. For a brief instant panic seized the girl. She must not be found!

Dragging Jerry by his collar, Kay opened a door which she thought led into a bedroom and pulled the animal through after her. She found herself in a large linen closet which was lighted by a small window cut high in the wall.

Kay scarcely dared breathe as the woman reached the top of the stairway. Without glancing toward the linen closet, Madame Le Blanc went down the hall.

Jerry did not like to be confined in such close quarters. He squirmed away from the girl. Before she could recapture him, his bushy tail brushed against an electric light bulb which had been left lying on top of a pile of linen. It crashed to the floor, exploding with a loud bang.

“Oh, now we are lost for certain,” Kay thought in panic.

The door of a bedroom was flung open as Madame Le Blanc rushed into the hallway. She switched on a light.

“What was that?” she called sharply. “Is anyone here?”

Kay remained perfectly still, scarcely daring to hope that she could escape detection. Jerry was trying to move around again. At any moment he might betray her with a bark!

To the girl’s intense relief the woman did not seem to realize that the sound had come from the linen closet. She went down the hall in the opposite direction, opening and closing various bedroom doors.

At length, deciding that the noise could have had no particular significance, the woman gave up her search. She returned to the lower floor, where Kay could hear her drawing water in the kitchen. A few minutes later the side door slammed shut, revealing that Madame Le Blanc had left the house. After waiting a little while to be certain the woman would not return, Kay came out of her hiding place.

“That was a close call, Jerry,” she whispered in the dog’s ear. “We’ll try to go on with the search now, but please be more careful with that big tail of yours!”

Moving to a window at the end of the hall, she gazed down into the sunken garden. Madame Le Blanc had rejoined her husband. The two were strolling toward the pagoda.

Satisfied that the couple would remain out-of-doors for some time, Kay turned around to look for Jerry. The dog, having slipped away from her, was pawing on one of the doors. She hastened to open it for him.

To her surprise she discovered a flight of stairs. The dog bounded up the steps, Kay following as quickly as she could. The upper floor was practically a duplication of the second story; a long hall with several doors opening from it.

Jerry paused before one of them. He began to whine and stood on his hind legs, pawing to get inside.

“So you think Mary Jane is in there, do you?” Kay asked him softly. “You’ve made so many mistakes that I don’t believe you.”

She twisted the brass knob only to find the door locked.

“Is anyone there?” she called in a low voice.

Receiving no answer, Kay was satisfied that no one was inside.

Yet Jerry’s actions were puzzling. When she turned away from the door, the dog stubbornly refused to follow. He kept pawing on the panel and whining. Once he ran to the girl and tugged at her dress.

“Mary Jane couldn’t be in there now or she would answer,” Kay whispered to him patiently. “Come along, Jerry, before we are caught.”

Grasping the dog by his collar, she dragged him away from the door by force. After all, it had been a mistake bringing him to the house. He had been more of a nuisance than a help. If she did not hasten away he might betray her yet to the Le Blancs!

On the way to the stairs Kay passed a window. As she glanced down at the garden her attention was attracted by a moving object. She paused abruptly, allowing Jerry to wriggle from her grasp.

Flitting gracefully about in the moonlight was a white-robed figure. Surely the dancer could not be Madame Le Blanc or her husband trying out new steps and effects to be used in their stage show!

Kay dismissed the thought as quickly as it had come. Only a few minutes earlier she had seen the Le Blancs walking toward the opposite end of the garden, so it was doubtful that they were even aware of the dancing figure.

Completely forgetting Jerry, Kay raised the window and leaned far out over the ledge. She could hear someone singing. The voice belonged to a man who carried the tune very poorly.

The dog, hearing the song, raised his front paws to the window sill and set up a terrific barking. The girl slammed down the window, but already Madame Le Blanc and her husband were running toward the house. The ghostly figure had disappeared in the darkness.

“Oh, do stop that barking!” Kay said crossly to Jerry.

“You’ve ruined everything now!”

The animal would not be silenced. Suddenly the panicky girl realized why he was so excited. Above the noise she heard a girl’s voice calling:

“Oh, Jerry darling! You’ve found me at last! I knew you would come to rescue me from my prison!”

CHAPTER XX

A PRISONER

Kay was so startled that momentarily she forgot her own danger. There could be no question about it—the voice came from the locked room! Undoubtedly the girl who was imprisoned had been asleep before the loud barks of the dog had aroused her.

“Jerry! Jerry darling, can’t you bring help?” she pleaded again.

Darting to the door, Kay tapped three times to attract the attention of the person inside.

“Who is it?” she demanded in a whisper. “Are you Mary Jane Barton?”

“Yes, yes! They locked me in here and went away. Can you get me out?”

On the lower floor a door slammed. Kay could hear Monsieur Le Blanc and his wife chattering angrily in French as they climbed the first stairway.

“There isn’t time now,” she told Mary Jane hurriedly. “The Le Blancs are on their way up here. Jerry and I will be

caught too.”

“Hide in the closet at the end of the hall.”

“They will search everywhere because they know the dog is here.”

“Then if you have the courage to do it, creep out on the window ledge,” Mary Jane instructed through the door. “It is wide enough if you balance yourself very carefully.”

“The Le Blancs will be able to see me. I have on a light colored dress.”

“In the closet at the end of the hall you will find a large black shawl,” Mary Jane said hurriedly. “Cover Jerry and yourself with that.”

By this time the dancing master and his wife had reached the second floor. Kay dared tarry for no further instructions. Finding the shawl, she dragged Jerry to the window and opened it.

As she gazed below, her courage nearly failed her. The ledge was wide, so she could balance herself there easily, but to manage Jerry was a different proposition. If he should refuse to lie still, he easily could topple them both to their deaths.

However, there was no time for debate. Quickly Kay scrambled over the sill. Drawing Jerry into her arms, she quietly lowered the window. When she dropped the shawl over the dog and herself, to her relief he offered no

resistance. Huddling close against the roof, she anxiously waited. A moment later the Le Blancs rushed up the stairway.

“Twice now I have heard the dog,” Madame declared in a shrill voice. “Last night I thought it was nothing. Now I am sure there is a stranger in the house.”

The couple searched diligently throughout the various attic bedrooms. Kay could not resist lifting a corner of the shawl to peer at them, but she quickly lowered the cloth when the man turned his flashlight in her direction.

As he came toward the window, she remained perfectly still, holding Jerry in a tight grip. Her position now was a precarious one. If the dog should move or make the slightest sound they were almost certain to be caught.

“I find zis window unlocked again,” she heard Monsieur say impatiently to his wife. “How many times haff I told you to be more careful?”

“I did lock it,” protested his wife indignantly. “I remember doing so last night.”

“Ze window is unlocked now—you see? Always you say, ‘I do zis, I do zat,’ but like all women your mind iss forgetful.”

“Only the great Monsieur Le Blanc is perfect,” the woman retorted angrily. “Why do you not try doing a few things for yourself instead of expecting me to take care of everything?”

As the quarrel waxed warmer, the couple did not notice Kay huddled beneath the dark shawl. Suddenly her heart sank within her. The window latch was snapped into place.

She and Jerry were prisoners on the ledge!

After a few minutes Kay peeped from beneath the shawl. She saw that Monsieur Le Blanc and his wife were standing in front of Mary Jane Barton's room. The woman rapped sharply on the door.

“Mary Jane! Are you awake?”

“What is it?” the girl asked in a voice pretending drowsiness.

“If you are in bed, get up and put on your clothes. We wish to question you.”

Waiting a few minutes, Madame Le Blanc took a key from her pocket and fitted it into the lock. She and her husband entered the bedroom, closing the door behind them.

Kay found herself consumed with a desire to learn what was happening. She could hear an indistinct rumble of voices, but nothing more.

Quickly she appraised her own situation. The wide ledge extended directly beneath the gently sloping roof. It would not be impossible to swing up on it and cross over to the window ledge which passed under the window of Mary Jane's bedroom!

“Come along, Jerry, old fellow,” she whispered encouragingly. “Since we’re locked out, we’ll have to risk it sooner or later anyway.”

Raising herself to the roof, she coaxed the dog up after her. A foot at a time she eased herself across the sloping roof and succeeded in reaching the other ledge without having made any noise. Creeping along close to the wall of the building, she stationed herself by the window where she could peep into Mary Jane’s lighted bedroom. Kay was startled by the sight.

“That girl does look enough like me to be my twin sister!” she thought in awe.

Her double was sitting on the bed, her gaze upon the floor. The Le Blancs were standing with their backs to the window.

“Now tell us ze truth, Mary Jane,” the dancing master ordered sternly. “You hear someone on zis floor, yes?”

“I’ve been in bed for the past hour,” the girl answered. “When you called, I got up and dressed.”

“Surely you hear ze dog barking?”

“A dog?” Mary Jane inquired innocently. “Are you sure? This isn’t the first time that you have claimed you heard unusual sounds in the house, Monsieur Le Blanc.”

“You are what you call it—impertinent,” the man said curtly. “Why I promise you a chance in my fine show I do not know. It was ze beeg mistake.”

“You offered me a position because you know I am a good dancer,” the girl replied with quiet confidence. “But I never would have accepted if I had suspected you would keep me practically a prisoner!”

“Then you should behave yourself,” broke in Madame Le Blanc. “What good are you to us when you cannot dance?”

“My ankle soon will be well.”

Mary Jane’s reply drew Kay’s attention to the girl’s right foot which was bandaged tightly. It was evident that she had not recovered yet from the automobile accident. Apparently the Le Blancs did not know how the injury had been received for Madame said irritably:

“I think maybe you only pretend to sprain the ankle, Mary Jane. You like to get out of practice.”

“That isn’t true,” the girl contradicted, losing her composure. “I need the money badly. I must be in the show when it opens.”

“Let me see you do your solo dance now,” commanded the woman cruelly. “Then we will know if you pretend.”

“Oh, please, not tonight,” pleaded the girl. “I am so tired and _____,”

“Tonight! Now!” ordered Monsieur Le Blanc.

Mary Jane arose slowly from the bed. She gathered herself together and began the dance, but as she made the first whirling turn, she suddenly collapsed with a moan of pain.

“Oh, my ankle! I’ve hurt it again. I shouldn’t have tried to dance so soon.”

“You will dance soon or not at all,” Madame Le Blanc muttered without sympathy.

“*Oui*,” added her husband grimly, “you do ze solo by tomorrow morning, or we, what you call it—keeck you out of ze show.”

“You aren’t giving me a fair chance,” Mary Jane protested as she sank down on the bed again and began to sob. “How can I possibly do the dance by tomorrow morning?”

“Zat iss for you to decide,” returned the master, shrugging his thin shoulders. “We will not feed you when you do not work.”

Tears rolled down Mary Jane’s cheeks. Unmoved, Madame Le Blanc and her husband turned to leave the bedroom.

“At least do not lock me in this hot, stuffy place again,” the girl requested quickly. “If I could walk up and down the hall a few times I might be able to loosen the muscles of my ankle.”

“If we let you out you would try to get away,” Madame Le Blanc said, frowning.

“Why should I attempt to escape when my only desire is to win a place in the show?”

“Very well, you may walk up and down in the hall for a few minutes,” the woman consented, pocketing the key. “We will wait until you have taken your exercise.”

This plan did not please Mary Jane for it was her intention to aid Kay as soon as the couple should have gone away.

“You are very good,” she murmured. “Will you not allow me to have a glass of cool milk also? It is so hot up here under the roof. My head throbs and aches.”

“Always you want something,” Madame Le Blanc complained bitterly. “The night is a cool one. But to keep you quiet I will fetch the milk.”

She and her husband went down the stairway leaving Mary Jane a few minutes of freedom. The moment they had disappeared, the girl started toward the hall window.

“No, here I am, outside your room,” Kay called softly, tapping the pane.

After hobbling back into the bedroom Mary Jane raised the window. As Kay leaped down lightly from the ledge, the girl uttered a muffled scream.

“Who are you?” she gasped in bewilderment.

“Your double,” chuckled Kay. “It gave me a start too when first I saw you.”

“You must slip downstairs at once,” the dancer urged in a frightened voice. “Madame Le Blanc will be coming back here any moment.”

“I can’t go without you, Mary Jane. I came here to help you.”

“There is a special reason why I cannot go,” the girl responded dully. “Please leave now while there is time. When Madame returns she will lock me in again.”

“Not if my little scheme works,” replied Kay mysteriously.

Ripping off a strip of cloth from her underskirt, Kay wadded it up. With a hairpin she pushed it into the door lock. Scarcely had she finished her work when the two girls heard footsteps on the stairway.

“She is coming!” warned Mary Jane in a terrified whisper. “Take Jerry and hide in the closet!”

Kay captured the dog and slipped out of sight barely an instant before Madame Le Blanc entered with the glass of milk.

“Here you are,” she said to the dancer, setting the glass on the table. “Why, what is the matter with you now? You are shaking like a leaf on a tree!”

“I—I have a chill,” the girl stammered.

“You will never be able to do the dance tomorrow,” the woman said crossly. “It would be much better if you be put out of the show tonight.”

“Oh, no, give me one more chance,” pleaded the girl.

Madame Le Blanc waited until Mary Jane had drunk the milk. Then, taking the empty glass, she left the bedroom. She turned the key, but Kay, who listened closely, did not hear it click in the lock.

As soon as Madame Le Blanc’s footsteps had died away, the girl came out of the closet. Darting to the door she tested it and found to her delight that it had not locked.

“We can escape very easily now, Mary Jane,” she declared triumphantly. “I thought my little scheme might work!”

“I wish I could go with you, but I can’t. There is a reason why I must remain—someone is depending upon me——”

“Your mother?” guessed Kay shrewdly.

“How did you know?”

“Because I found her living in the boathouse down by the river. She was ill and in need of food.”

“Oh, my poor, darling mother. She is there waiting for me now——”

“Your mother has been taken to the home of an old friend,” Kay explained reassuringly. “She is being well cared for by a Mrs. Cary.”

“I’ve been so worried about her,” confessed Mary Jane in a calmer voice. “I was unable to go to her because they locked

me up in this attic room.”

“Why were you imprisoned?”

“Madame Le Blanc caught me stealing food. It was for mother, but she thought I intended it for myself, and Monsieur is very strict about a dancer’s diet. I dared not explain.”

“Even so, it was cruel to keep you up here.”

“Monsieur Le Blanc was especially angry at me because I injured my ankle. He thought I merely sprained it, but the truth is, I twisted a tendon in an automobile accident.”

“I know, Mary Jane.”

“You *know*?” the girl echoed blankly. “How could you when I never set eyes upon you until a few minutes ago?”

“I am being sued for your accident,” Kay explained ruefully. “A Mr. Craken demands that I pay him three thousand dollars. You see, we look alike and others have mistaken us for the same person, or at least that is the way it appears. Everything is in a mix-up.”

“It was a bad accident,” Mary Jane said disconsolately. “Just the same I didn’t suppose a suit would be brought against me. Oh, dear, now I am in worse trouble than before.”

“So far I am the one who is being sued,” chuckled Kay. “You needn’t worry about that part for a while. All of the evidence

isn't in yet.”

Jerry had been lying at Mary Jane's feet, licking his mistress's hand. Now he suddenly pricked up his ears and listened.

“Sh!” warned Kay alertly. “I think someone is sneaking up the stairs.”

“It's probably Madame Le Blanc again! What shall we do?”

“Jump into bed and pull the covers over you,” Kay advised as she reached up and snapped off the electric lights.

“Pretend to be asleep.”

“I'll take care of Jerry,” Mary Jane offered, seizing the dog. “He'll be much quieter with me.”

Kay intended to hide in the closet again, but she had waited too long. There was no time in which to cross the room. She barely had a moment to roll under the bed before Madame Le Blanc reached the uppermost landing. The woman turned the key, under the impression that she had unlocked the bedroom door. Noiselessly she entered.

“Are you asleep?” she called in a whisper.

When there was no answer she tiptoed across the room to stand by the bedside and peer intently at Mary Jane.

CHAPTER XXI

TRIXIE RUE

The moment was a tense one for both Mary Jane and Kay. Any moment Jerry might betray them by moving under the covers. Finally, Madame Le Blanc seemed satisfied that the girl was asleep, for without turning on the light she tiptoed from the room again.

Neither of the girls heard her descend the stairs, so for over a half hour they remained exactly as they were, afraid to move a muscle lest the woman might be listening at the door. At last Kay could endure the cramped position no longer. Deciding that Madame Le Blanc must have gone to a lower floor, she cautiously whispered:

“Mary Jane!”

“Yes?”

“Do we dare turn on a light?”

“It would be dangerous. Madame may be hiding in the next room. She has very sneaking ways.”

“I can’t stand it here much longer,” Kay complained, stretching a paralyzed arm. “We ought to be getting along

while the coast is clear.”

“I dare not leave,” Mary Jane protested, still conversing in a whisper. “If you knew everything——”

“Suppose you tell me your story, Mary Jane. In the first place, how did you happen to be in an automobile accident?”

“I borrowed a car which belonged to Madame Le Blanc’s brother,” the girl admitted reluctantly. “The machine had stood idle for some time because Lazarre is in Europe.”

“You did not ask the Madame’s permission?”

“Oh, no! She had issued orders that none of the girls were to leave the house, but I just had to get away for a little while. Everything would have been all right if only I hadn’t crashed into that other car.”

“How did the accident happen, Mary Jane?”

“It wasn’t my fault—I’m sure it wasn’t. I was driving along at a moderate rate of speed when an auto swerved so that I couldn’t avoid hitting it. I could almost imagine the driver did it on purpose!”

“You may be right at that,” Kay commented softly.

“The car was an old wreck and looked as if it had been in a good many accidents,” Mary Jane went on, “but I didn’t think about that at the time. I guess the crash must have

stunned me. Anyway I woke up in the hospital with a twisted ankle and a few bruises.”

Kay had become deeply interested in the story. Convinced that Madame Le Blanc would not return without giving warning of her approach, the girl rolled from under the bed and sat down beside Mary Jane.

“I suppose you didn’t give the hospital authorities your real name?” she questioned the girl.

“Yes, I did!” Mary Jane declared instantly. “I assure you, I had no intention of being a hit-run driver even if the accident wasn’t my fault. I not only gave my name but my address as well.”

“The police called upon you at the hospital?”

“No, because I left right away. I thought they might talk with me later, but they didn’t. That’s why I decided I wouldn’t get into any trouble on account of the accident.”

“What became of the car, Mary Jane?”

“You mean the one I borrowed? I think the police must have hauled it away. It was never returned here. Madame Le Blanc believes it has been stolen and I haven’t the courage to tell her the truth.”

“You are in an awkward position,” Kay said thoughtfully.

“Awkward doesn’t half express it,” sighed Mary Jane, restraining Jerry who was trying to leap from the bed. “They

can't sue me for any money because I haven't a dime, but the police might send me to jail. Then what would become of my poor mother?"

"You would do almost anything for her, wouldn't you, Mary Jane?"

"Yes," the girl answered simply. "If it weren't for her I would give myself up to the police. But you see how it is. She needs me to support her, and all her life she has counted upon me becoming a great dancer."

"Your mother also was a talented dancer?" questioned Kay, hoping that Mary Jane would reveal some facts about her family.

"Mother trained me," the girl replied briefly, offering no additional information.

Kay could not help feeling annoyed for it was evident that Mary Jane had no intention of telling anything about her mother's past. Unless the girl should confide in her, she would not be able to help her out of her present predicament.

"Mary Jane, I wish you would tell me why your mother must remain in hiding," she urged. "I might be able to do a great deal for you both if only you could bring yourself to trust me."

"How could you be of assistance?"

"For one thing, I might be able to save your place in the show. I dance fairly well, and we look enough alike to fool

almost anyone.”

“But why should you wish to help me?” the Barton girl asked somewhat suspiciously. “You don’t know me at all, and I’ve already caused you a lot of trouble.”

“You and your mother need a friend.”

“Yes, we do,” Mary Jane acknowledged, torn between emotions. “I’ve never known anyone so kind as you. I—I don’t know what to say——”

As if sensing her uncertainty, Jerry began to lick the hand of his new-found mistress. He then crawled across the bed and bestowed a similar caress upon Kay.

“Jerry is trying to tell me that you are my good friend as well as my double,” laughed Mary Jane softly. “And I know that you are!”

“Then won’t you trust me?” Kay pleaded eagerly.

“Mother’s story is a distressing one,” began the dancer reluctantly. “I suppose you have heard that we were related to the Huntleys who once occupied this fine home?”

Kay nodded and did not interrupt the narrative.

“Mother’s first husband—my father—was gassed in the World War and died a few years later. His name was Barton, so naturally I call myself Mary Jane Barton.”

“Yet your mother is Trixie Rue?”

“After my father’s death she married again,” explained Mary Jane, a note of bitterness creeping into her voice. “My stepfather was a talented dancer, but a selfish, cruel man. He used mother’s money, deserted her, and left our business affairs in a dreadful tangle.”

“I should have thought Mrs. Huntley would have helped.”

“Oh, she did,” Mary Jane declared quickly. “Even before my stepfather went off she gave mother money. Then later she tried to set her up in business, lending her several thousand dollars in a lump sum. The difficulty was that Mother had no judgment regarding people. She trusted a man who turned out to be a scoundrel. They went into partnership together. Later she was told that in the name of the firm he had signed fraudulent notes which would send them both to jail.

“Mother became panic-stricken. She fled to Europe, taking me with her. The matter was hushed up, and as soon as possible Mr. and Mrs. Huntley went abroad also. After Mr. Huntley’s death, Mother and I lived very happily in Paris with my aunt. I studied dancing, we visited the art galleries and had all the comforts of life. But it lasted only a short time.”

“Mrs. Huntley died?” inquired Kay in a sympathetic voice.

“Yes, she had a heart attack and passed away very suddenly. It was a shock to us when we learned about her will. My aunt always said that she had left everything to Mother and me.”

“It did not turn out that way?”

“We did not receive a penny. The lawyers told us that everything was left to charity.”

“Strange, when Mrs. Huntley was so devoted to your mother,” Kay remarked thoughtfully. “Did you see the will?”

“I believe the lawyers showed a paper of some sort to Mother.”

“She was satisfied that her sister had cut her off without a penny?”

“No, she wasn’t,” Mary Jane declared with sudden spirit. “Mother always said she thought the lawyers cheated us, but we had no proof. We could do nothing. It would have taken money to contest the will, and we had barely enough to buy passage to the United States.”

“I should have thought your mother would have been afraid to return to this country considering the charge against her.”

“We had no alternative because neither of us had a chance of finding work abroad. Mother disguised herself as an old lady. For a time we lived in a cheap furnished apartment but our funds kept dwindling at an alarming rate.”

“Oh, now I understand how Binky made the mistake of taking your mother for an older person,” Kay murmured to herself.

“Binky?” inquired Mary Jane in bewilderment. “Do you know Binky Kemp?”

“He is working for me now,” Kay returned, smiling.

“I never was well acquainted with the young man,” Mary Jane admitted. “Mother and I often noticed him in the apartment house, but we avoided talking with him for fear he would learn our secret.”

“Nevertheless, I do know a good friend of yours. His name is Hal Peterson!”

“Oh, do you really know *him*?” asked Mary Jane eagerly.

“He mistook me for you, and I don’t mind saying that I had a most interesting evening!”

“Hal came here to the house to see Monsieur Le Blanc,” Mary Jane revealed in a dreamy voice. “He was acting as an agent for the advertising firm which will handle publicity for our show. We met by accident in the hallway and——”

“A case of love at first sight?” Kay interrupted teasingly.

“Well, practically so,” admitted Mary Jane, laughing self-consciously. “Hal kept making excuses to call at the house, and one evening he brought several young men, fairly prominent in the theatrical world. The Le Blancs were almost forced to give a party and allow all of us to attend, but were they provoked! Madame Le Blanc hates to waste a penny, especially for food!”

“I imagine Hal brought his young friends solely as a pretext for getting to see you again, Mary Jane.”

“I thought so at the time,” the girl acknowledged in a more subdued tone. “He led me to believe that he would call again, but he never did. I guess I was silly to allow myself to become interested in him.”

“Mary Jane, what if I should tell you that Hal Peterson is very much in love with you?”

“Really in love with me?” the girl whispered, gripping Kay’s hand. “Oh, it would make me so happy! But you have no reason to say such a thing! You couldn’t know how he feels toward me.”

“But I do, Mary Jane. Hal Peterson is eager to marry you whenever you say the word. He told me so.”

“He told *you*! Well, I like that! Why doesn’t he tell me about it?”

“He has us hopelessly mixed up,” chuckled Kay. “I met him in a tea room and he mistook me for you. I admit I should have told him my real name, but I didn’t. He proposed to me and I have a date with him for Saturday night. Or rather you have!”

“I can’t make any sense out of what you are saying!”

Kay gave a more detailed account of her meeting with Hal Peterson, and finished by declaring again that Mary Jane must keep the Saturday evening appointment with the young man.

“I wouldn’t know what to tell him,” Mary Jane replied unhappily. “How can I agree to marry Hal when Mother depends upon me? I must keep on with my career.”

“You have set your heart upon being in the show?”

“It will be a step upward. If my dancing attracts attention, I should be able to get better work.”

“Do you think you will be able to do your solo dance by tomorrow morning?”

“My ankle pains me terribly,” the girl answered with a little moan. “I am afraid I will fail dismally, but at least I must try.”

“What is apt to happen is that you’ll permanently injure your foot so you’ll never be able to dance again.”

“The doctor did warn me to be careful,” Mary Jane admitted anxiously. “But unless I try out for the part tomorrow, I’ll lose my chance to be in the show.”

Kay was silent for a moment. She really wished to aid Mary Jane. Besides, she was excited by the facts which the girl had revealed concerning her mother’s past. By remaining over night at the Huntley Mansion she might gather more information which might bring the case to a speedy and perhaps happy solution.

On the other hand if she should fail to carry off Mary Jane’s role well, the girl might never forgive her.

Suddenly she made up her mind that she must accept the responsibility.

“Mary Jane, there’s only one thing to do,” she said decisively. “We must change places. You can return to my home while I stay here and try to win a place for you in the show!”

“The Le Blancs would be sure to discover the deception,” said the girl nervously.

“Not if you teach me the steps of your solo dance.”

“I can’t do it here,” Mary Jane protested feebly. “Madame Le Blanc would hear you practising.”

“We’ll slip out of doors and rehearse in the sunken garden!” Kay proposed, sweeping aside the last objection to her plan. “Come, there is no time to lose!”

CHAPTER XXII

REHEARSAL BY MOONLIGHT

Against her better judgment, Mary Jane Barton allowed Kay to persuade her that the scheme could be carried through. However, she protested that it would never do for her to return to the Tracey home.

“Mother will be glad to have you,” Kay assured her new friend heartily. “I’ll write her a note. She’ll understand, for she’s the grandest mother anyone could have.”

Mary Jane brought writing materials. Quickly the message was composed. Then Kay tried on the older girl’s dancing shoes and her various dancing costumes. Each was a perfect fit.

“We really are duplicates in almost every way, Mary Jane,” she laughed. “I only hope I am able to reproduce your style of dancing.”

“Monsieur Le Blanc is an expert,” Mary Jane replied uneasily. “I warn you it will be difficult to fool him.”

“Then the sooner I get at my practising the better.”

Taking Jerry with them, the two girls cautiously stole down the stairway and into the garden. The lower part of the house was entirely dark, indicating that the Le Blancs had retired for the night.

Selecting a smooth expanse of terrace, Mary Jane hobbled through her dance as best she could. Kay watched closely, asking questions about the more difficult steps which the girl could not demonstrate because of her injured ankle.

“Now you might try the first movement if you like,” Mary Jane suggested in a disheartened tone. “I really am afraid it will prove too difficult for you.”

Kay did not reply. She began the dance with confidence, executing each step with an ease and finish which amazed her companion.

“Why, you do it marvelously!” praised the older girl, clapping her hands in delight. “One would think you had practised the routine for months!”

“Many of the steps are familiar,” Kay laughed, highly pleased by the other’s approval. “Our school dance club is presenting a show next week at the Children’s Home. In one of our numbers we use a solo very much like yours.”

“You really dance like a professional,” Mary Jane said with genuine enthusiasm. “Frankly, I had no hope that you could carry it off.”

“Now you think that I can?” asked Kay excitedly.

“Yes, I’ll drill you a little more to be certain. Even one misstep infuriates Monsieur Le Blanc. He is so temperamental.”

With Jerry as an admiring audience, the dancing lesson went on. Kay made an attractive figure as she moved gracefully over the velvety grass, every line of her supple body softened by the moonlight.

“You have it perfectly,” Mary Jane declared at last. “There is no need to practise any longer.”

While Kay sat down on a stone bench to catch her breath she listened to a detailed account of the manner in which Monsieur Le Blanc would put her through the routine at rehearsal the next morning. Mary Jane told her the position she would occupy in the chorus, and the names of the girls she would meet, giving a brief description of each person.

“Elaine Carson may talk with you, but the others have never been very friendly,” she remarked. “You’ll have no trouble deceiving them.”

“Do the girls live in the house?” Kay inquired curiously.

“A few of them do. They were all here for a while, but Monsieur Le Blanc decided he couldn’t afford the board bill any longer. Remember, rehearsals start promptly at eight-thirty.”

“I think I have everything straight,” replied Kay, arising from the bench. “Oh, yes, I meant to speak of this before. You will meet Hal Peterson Saturday night?”

“Yes, but I can’t promise to marry him. I’ve explained why I must go on with my dancing.”

“If your mother had a means of support you would take a different attitude?”

“I might. But why think about the impossible?”

“One can’t be certain what is impossible, Mary Jane. I have a feeling that things may work out better than you hope. Let’s not talk about that now. The point I meant to bring up is this: if you see Hal, you must carry on just as if you had met him last Tuesday night.”

“I’ll not betray you,” promised Mary Jane, laughing for the first time.

As the girls took Jerry to the parked car, Kay instructed her companion how to reach the Tracey home. She also promised that she would try to write a note the next day and hide it under a certain flat stone near the road where it could be picked up.

“You’re not afraid to drive, are you, Mary Jane?” she inquired.

“I do feel a little nervous after such a disastrous accident,” the girl acknowledged ruefully. “But I’ll get there all right.”

“The car handles easily. I’ll show you how to start the motor.”

The two girls said good-bye, wishing each other luck. Mary Jane drove away with Jerry. She soon became at ease with the car, but her ankle pained her severely whenever it was necessary for her to put on the foot brake. After turning down several wrong streets, she finally located the address given her by Kay. Somewhat timidly she introduced herself to Mrs. Tracey.

“Dear me, for a moment I thought you were my daughter!” the woman exclaimed in astonishment. “Do come in, Miss Barton.”

“I have a note from Kay, Mrs. Tracey. It explains everything.”

The message requested Mrs. Tracey to keep Mary Jane at the house until Kay should return from the Huntley mansion. If possible she was to hide the dancer’s identity.

Although greatly disturbed because her daughter would remain over night on such a dangerous mission, Mrs. Tracey refrained from letting her visitor see her uneasiness. She cordially assured Mary Jane that she was welcome to stay as long as she might like.

“I’ll not trouble you except for tonight,” the girl declared, as she went on to reveal the plan by which Kay hoped to save her place in the show.

“My dear child, surely you don’t expect to dance very soon with that injured ankle!”

“I must,” Mary Jane replied earnestly. “Don’t you think it will be better in a day or so?”

“Only a doctor could tell you that.”

“I was supposed to have gone back to Doctor Brown day before yesterday, but I couldn’t get away from the Huntley mansion.”

“It is very foolish to neglect the injury,” Mrs. Tracey told her visitor. “If you have no objection I’ll call a doctor immediately.”

“I suppose it would be wise,” the girl agreed reluctantly. “You are so kind.”

Mrs. Tracey knew that Doctor Brown was aware of Mary Jane’s striking resemblance to Kay, so after a moment’s thought she decided to call in a specialist who had never seen either of the girls. When Doctor Farnsdale arrived a half hour later, he assumed that the patient was Mrs. Tracey’s daughter.

“This ankle has been neglected, young lady,” he said severely, after he had made an examination. “My orders are to keep off of it for three days.”

“But Doctor——”

“If you refuse to follow my instructions, I can do nothing for you. I’ll massage the ankle and rebandage it, but unless you give the muscles and tendons an absolute rest, there will be no improvement.”

“If I do keep off of it will I be able to dance within three or four days?”

“So you are a dancer?” chuckled the doctor. “I remember reading about the show in the paper last night. A benefit for the new Children’s Home, isn’t it? A very worthy cause.”

Neither Mary Jane nor Mrs. Tracey replied, but the doctor did not notice this, for he was taking adhesive tape and bandages from his black case.

“We’ll have to get you patched up by that time,” he laughed. “Yes, I’ll promise that if you’ll give your ankle an absolute rest you’ll be able to dance again within four days.”

When he finished his work, he again warned Mary Jane to be careful, then took his leave. As Mrs. Tracey went to the front door with the doctor, she noticed Binky Kemp loitering across the street. Recognizing him as the young man whom Kay had helped to find work, she wondered why he was there.

Switching off the light, she stood for a long time at the window. Presently Binky wandered slowly down the street. With a sigh of relief Mrs. Tracey went upstairs with her guest and both went to bed.

In the morning while Kay’s mother was preparing breakfast, there came a rap on the kitchen door. Answering the summons, she was taken back slightly to see Binky Kemp standing on the porch, his eyes bloodshot from lack of sleep.

“May I see Miss Tracey, please?” he requested in a tired voice.

“Why, Kay isn’t here now.” Mrs. Tracey spoke before she stopped to consider her words.

Binky gave the woman a queer look.

“She isn’t here? I just saw your daughter through an upstairs window!”

“Oh!” Mrs. Tracey became flustered. “I should have said that she can’t receive visitors.”

“Your daughter isn’t sick, is she?” Binky asked quickly. “I saw the doctor leaving the house last night.”

“I called in a specialist to look at an ankle that was hurt in an accident,” the woman said nervously.

“Say, that’s too bad,” Binky replied sympathetically. “You think I can’t talk with her?”

“Not today, I am afraid.”

“I don’t know what to do. She told me to report if I found out anything about that fellow who has been watching your house.”

“I wondered why you were standing across the street last night, Binky! Suppose you tell me what you learned.”

“There’s no reason for you to worry, Mrs. Tracey. I’ve found out that the man is a private detective. He was sent to guard the house.”

“Well, of all things!” exclaimed Mrs. Tracey, sighing in relief. “By whom, I wonder?”

“I haven’t been able to find out yet.”

Mrs. Tracey thought that she could guess, and her fears immediately were set to rest. Surely Cousin Bill had been responsible for hiring the detective! Even though the young lawyer was not making his present whereabouts known he had kept in close touch with the situation.

After Kay’s mother promised to deliver Binky’s message, the young fellow left the residence without guessing that the girl he had seen through the window actually was another person. While returning to the rooming house where he lived, he encountered his former employer, Mr. Earle. The man stopped to inquire how he was getting along with his new work. During the conversation Binky mentioned that Kay had injured her ankle severely in an accident.

Later that morning Mr. Earle repeated the news to his son Ronald, who in turn told Wilma and Betty Worth! By afternoon Ethel Eaton had heard of the supposed mishap. She was the only person who received the information with elation.

“I guess Kay won’t be able to take part in the show now!” she told herself gleefully. “And the other members of the

club will dance to empty seats! It serves them right for not letting me join.”

Ethel had disposed of many tickets to the moving picture show, but to sell them she had neglected her school work. Every day she received reprimands from her teachers who warned her that she was in danger of failing.

Unaware of the story being told about her so-called accident, Kay was having exciting adventures at the Huntley mansion. They started early in the morning when she was awakened by a loud pounding on her bedroom door.

“Mary Jane!” called Madame Le Blanc in a shrill voice. “Get up!”

A key turned in the lock, but as Kay knew the door had not been secured.

“Rehearsals in twenty minutes!” the woman warned her without coming into the bedroom. “Remember, if you fail this time, out you go!”

With feverish haste Kay donned the dancing costume which Mary Jane had laid out for her. She combed her hair as she had observed the other girl wore hers. Before slipping into a warm flannel robe, she tried a few of the dance steps to refresh her memory.

“Now I guess I’m ready,” she thought. “Oh, I nearly forgot to bandage my ankle!”

Quickly she adjusted the white wrappings. Then, afraid that she might be late, she hastened down the stairway. At the door of the rehearsal room she hesitated to gather courage.

“I can’t fail,” she whispered to herself. “It’s going to be difficult, but for Mary Jane’s sake I must carry off the role successfully.”

CHAPTER XXIII

A REVEALING CONVERSATION

Opening the door, Kay walked boldly into the rehearsal room. She had a moment of panic when she saw several other members of the dancing troupe there ahead of her. Save for a few sleepy “good mornings” the girls took no notice of her. Limping slightly, she went over to a chair against the wall and sat down.

“Monsieur isn’t here yet?” she asked a dark-haired girl who was adjusting ribbons on toe slippers.

“No,” the other replied without glancing up. “*He* has a fit if *we* are a minute late. It’s all right for him to oversleep.”

Kay was satisfied that her voice would not betray her. She had spoken to the girl merely to make the test.

“Here he comes now!” her companion exclaimed, rising quickly to her feet.

As Monsieur Le Blanc entered the room, the girls lined up across the floor. The dancing master’s alert gaze swept from one person to another, rested for an instant upon Kay, then roved on.

“We will do our setting up exercises now,” he announced crisply. “Mademoiselle Elaine—you at ze end. Up shoulders! Music! Now, *une, deux, trois!*”

The man’s nasal voice droned on, counting monotonously as the girls twisted, bent and stretched in time to the music. Kay had no difficulty in following the movements of the others for she had practised similar exercises at school.

“Now to breakfast!” ordered Monsieur Le Blanc after fifteen minutes of strenuous work. “A leetle rest and then back here at nine o’clock. Plenty of work today.”

The girls who lived in the mansion trooped into the dining room. Kay waited until everyone had found a seat, then slid into the one empty chair.

“Monsieur Le Blanc has his nerve to call this meal a breakfast!” exclaimed one of the dancers angrily. “What does he think we are anyway? Humming birds? Nothing to eat except dry toast and cold breakfast food!”

“Garnished with skimmed milk,” added another girl. “He gives us less to eat each day and works us harder.”

Even if the food had been inviting Kay could not have eaten very much, for she was too excited. She had escaped detection thus far, but the all-important test would come when she must dance alone.

“Don’t you ever answer when your name is spoken, Mary Jane?” demanded a voice at her right.

With a murmured apology Kay turned around to face a dreamy-eyed girl who reminded her of Wilma Worth. She saw that she was the same dancer whom Monsieur Le Blanc had addressed as Elaine.

“You’re not eating very much this morning, honey,” the girl observed.

“No, I’m not very hungry.”

“Well, you look as if you felt better than you did yesterday, Mary Jane. Your eyes have their old sparkle. Darling, you actually look beautiful!”

“Thank you,” laughed Kay, blushing.

“It’s the effect of love, no doubt. Have you heard from Hal yet?”

“Perhaps,” replied Kay with a smile, and devoted herself to the unappetizing dish of cereal.

Breakfast finished, the girls were allowed a few minutes of freedom. Kay went upstairs to her room and started to make the bed. While she was leaning over with her back to the door a woman armed with a dust cloth and a floor mop quietly entered the room. Upon seeing the girl she dropped both cleaning implements and exclaimed shrilly:

“Mercy on us!”

Startled, Kay whirled about, fully expecting that the maid had discovered the deception.

“You shouldn’t have done that, Mary Jane! It’s bound to bring you bad luck!”

“What will bring me bad luck?” Kay asked, recovering from her fright.

“Why, removing your mole, Mary Jane! Just before the show opens, too.”

“Oh, I’m not superstitious,” laughed Kay. “You must admit I did a good job in taking it off. I’ll venture you can’t even tell where it was!”

“I can too,” the cleaning woman insisted. “It was on the back of your neck.”

“About here?” inquired Kay, pointing with her finger.

“No, about an inch lower down.”

“Even if you know where it was, you can’t see the scar,” chuckled Kay.

When the cleaning woman had gone, the Tracey girl took Mary Jane’s make-up box and painted a small black spot on the back of her neck at the place which had been indicated. As she was putting away the kit, there came a light rap on the door. Before she could answer, it was pushed open by one of the girls, a tap dancer whom Kay had heard the others call by the name of Susie.

“You’re wanted down in the rehearsal room, Mary Jane. Monsieur Le Blanc says you’re to come immediately. You

must do your solo or else——”

“Or else I be keeched out of ze show?” Kay asked, mimicking the dancing master’s speech.

“It might be worse than that,” hinted Susie. “The great Monsieur says he may turn you over to the police.”

“He couldn’t have been serious!” Kay exclaimed, genuinely startled.

“That man never makes jokes, darling. It seems there is some little matter about stealing food—oh, yes, and an automobile!”

This was a disturbing revelation to Kay, for she knew that Mary Jane had felt the Le Blancs were not aware of the incident in connection with the missing auto. If Monsieur had known about it all this time, why had he made no threats before against the girl?

“If you’re able to do your solo dance well, I imagine he’ll be fairly lenient with you,” Susie said carelessly, as she turned away. “He really needs you in the show, Mary Jane.”

“I’ll be right down, Susie.”

After the girl had gone Kay again ran through a few of the steps of the dance to refresh her memory. Then she gave her hair a final touch before the mirror and hastened to the rehearsal room. As Kay entered, the master bestowed upon her a hard, cold smile.

“You are ready, Mademoiselle?”

“I am, Monsieur Le Blanc.”

“Let us hope my petite one will not fail,” the man said with a smirk. “It would be—ah, what you say—tragic beeziness to see one so young, so charming, so bee-u-tiful, in ze jail.”

Fortunately for Kay the music started at this moment. The girl put every iota of her ability into the number. Now and again she caught an occasional glimpse of the master’s face and was sure that he felt satisfied with the performance.

“Um, zat iss good,” he praised grudgingly when she had finished. “Later we will perfect some parts. You caught ze rhythm. And now since ze ankle is well again, I will put you in ze ensembles.”

Panic seized Kay at Monsieur Le Blanc’s words, for she was unfamiliar with any of these routines. Mary Jane had taught her only a few of the steps, believing that she would not be asked to do more than the solo number.

“Please, Monsieur,” she pleaded, sinking down into a chair. “Not today. My ankle still pains me, and I should give it a rest.”

“Line up with ze others or out you go!” the man cried in sudden fury. “You are lazy, zat is ze trouble!”

Kay felt sick at heart as she limped away to join the other girls. Thus far she had escaped detection, but this new hurdle

seemed for a moment too high for her to scale. Her one hope was Elaine.

Seeking the girl, she asked, “Would you mind running over the steps with me? I’ve not tried them for so many days I’m terribly rusty.”

Elaine regarded her with astonishment.

“I didn’t know you ever forget a step, Mary Jane. Come out into the hall, and we’ll go over them together. But we have only a minute.”

As they practiced together, Kay asked a number of questions, learning her position in the line-up and just what would be expected of her.

“My, you have forgotten a lot,” Elaine declared as they joined the others again. “But with luck you should get by.”

Luck did favor Kay. Intently watching the others during the rehearsal she made only one misstep. Fortunately Monsieur Le Blanc did not see it. However, the session was an ordeal and she was more than ready for the brief rest period when finally it was granted.

“Now to your rooms for half an hour,” ordered the harsh master. “We practice again at eleven.”

Madame Le Blanc, who had been watching the rehearsal, arose and spoke to her husband as the girls filed out of the room.

“I go now to make a telephone call, Henri. If you will excuse me, please?”

“*Tres bien*,” the man replied irritably. “But do not be long.”

Kay loitered behind after the other members of the troupe had gone upstairs. She saw Madame Le Blanc go to a small study which adjoined the dining room. Carefully the woman closed all the doors.

“I wonder to whom she intends to telephone?” mused Kay. “It must be an important conversation or she wouldn’t be so afraid someone might hear it.”

The lower floor appeared deserted, for the dancing master had remained in the rehearsal room and likely would be detained there for some time. Kay stole to the doorway of the study.

“Hello, hello, is this you, Lazarre?” she heard Madame Le Blanc ask in a low voice.

The name startled Kay, who had been under the impression that the woman’s brother was abroad. Had he returned to Brantwood recently? Now deeply interested in the telephone conversation, she pressed her ear close to the panel.

“Nothing new has developed,” she heard Madame say. “What is that, Lazarre? But it cannot be true! Trixie Rue is dead! She could not be here in this country!”

Apparently the man at the other end of the wire convinced his sister that the information was correct, for in a moment

Kay heard her moan:

“This is terrible, Lazarre. Does she suspect anything?”

Kay could only guess at the response which she thought must have been in the negative. She listened intently as Madame Le Blanc went on:

“How will you find her, Lazarre? We have not one single clue.”

There was a long pause, then an incredulous note crept into the Madame’s voice.

“Why, Lazarre, I never even thought of that before! The girl we have here, Mary Jane, may be the daughter of Trixie Rue! I find out at once!”

Kay heard no more, for at that moment a door at the end of the hall opened. Someone was coming, and she did not wish to be caught. Frantically she looked about for a place to hide.

CHAPTER XXIV

FINAL CLUES

Barely in time to avoid being seen, Kay dodged into the dining room. Peeping through a crack in the door, she saw the cleaning woman come down the hallway with her mop and broom.

“No chance of hearing any more now,” Kay thought in disappointment. “But later I must try to get into the study and look around.”

She was firmly convinced from the conversation which she had overheard that Lazarre had played a vital part in Trixie Rue’s life. Likewise, she had not forgotten Monsieur’s accusation that his wife’s brother had got money dishonestly. Kay wondered if possibly the man could have been the lawyer who handled the Huntley property abroad.

Deciding that Madame Le Blanc would be certain to question her soon, she retired to her room. The girl had not been there ten minutes when the woman tapped on the door.

“Come in,” Kay invited, preparing herself for a difficult interview.

“How are you feeling, Mary Jane?” the master’s wife asked with a pretense of kindness.

“My ankle is much better, thank you.”

Madame Le Blanc sat down on the edge of the bed, regarding the girl with shrewd eyes.

“Do you know, Mary Jane, I was thinking only this morning—you have never told us very much about yourself. Your mother, she must have been a very talented dancer, yes?”

“My mother never danced a step in her life,” answered Kay truthfully.

“No?” The woman could not hide her disappointment. She hesitated a moment, then said, “You speak French very well, Mary Jane. Often I say to my husband, ‘that girl must have lived abroad.’”

“Really?” asked Kay, pretending to be highly flattered. “I’ve always wanted to go to France and live, but I’ve never even visited there.”

Madame Le Blanc questioned the girl further, but Kay sparred cleverly. Presently the woman went away, seemingly satisfied that Mary Jane could not be related to Trixie Rue.

All that day rehearsals went on. Considering the harshness of the teacher, Kay passed the various tests with flying colors, but long before the girls were dismissed she was tired enough to drop. She had never before put in such an

exhausting day in her life and wondered how the delicate Mary Jane endured the strict training.

At the dinner hour Kay found an opportunity to write another note to her mother and one to her double, requesting that if possible the girl relieve her of her duties the following evening.

“By staying here tomorrow I’ll have an opportunity to gather more evidence against Lazzarre and his sister,” she reflected. “Monsieur Le Blanc has kept me so busy today I’ve had no chance to do anything except dance.”

Throughout the afternoon the man’s wife had watched Kay closely, and even after rehearsal ended she scarcely allowed the girl out of her sight. In vain Kay waited for a moment when she might slip away from the house and hide her letters under the flat stone by the road.

At last, in sheer desperation, she induced Elaine to take the message, allowing the romantic girl to believe that within the envelope was a secret note to Hal Peterson. Whether or not the letter was picked up she had no way of learning, for if she so much as tried to step from the house Madame Le Blanc’s eagle eye followed her. As Kay was going to her room, the woman neatly blocked the stairway.

“Oh, Mary Jane, just a moment, please.”

Kay steeled herself for another interview.

“I know that your last name is Barton,” Madame Le Blanc said, “but when we were talking this morning you did not tell

me who your mother was before she married. Could she have been related to the Huntleys?”

“The Huntleys? Weren’t they the people who owned this house?”

“Yes, I think so,” the woman admitted reluctantly.

“They had a great deal of money, didn’t they?” Kay went on, thoroughly enjoying the woman’s discomfiture. “I heard they died abroad leaving a rather large sum, but there was some mix-up about it. Did you ever learn who received the fortune?”

“I—I wouldn’t know anything about that.”

“Since you rent the house I thought you might have heard. You do rent it, don’t you?”

“Why, yes—yes, of course,” the woman stammered.

Her eyes fell and she retreated hastily to the kitchen. Kay smiled as she went on up to her room. She had put an end to the questioning, and in addition had added to her stock of information. From Madame Le Blanc’s guilty manner it was easy to guess that the Huntley house was being used rent free. Probably it was being given by the dishonest Lazarre!

After everyone had gone to bed, Kay stole downstairs once more. Entering the den, she closed and locked the door. Satisfied that she would not be disturbed, she switched on the light and turned her attention to the desk.

The next two hours were spent in going through papers and letters belonging to Monsieur Le Blanc and his wife. It was tedious work, for nearly all of the documents pertained to the dancing show. Weary and half drugged with sleep though she was, Kay examined the papers carefully.

At last her patience was rewarded. In the scrap basket she came upon a torn letter written by Lazarre to his sister. In it the dishonest lawyer frankly admitted that he had cheated Trixie Rue and her daughter out of the Huntley estate! He had substituted a fake will for the one originally entrusted to him.

“This is all I need,” Kay thought triumphantly as she pocketed the letter. “It should be enough to convict Lazarre and show that his sister made use of the stolen funds.”

Rearranging everything as she had found it, the excited girl stole back quietly to her room. Tumbling into bed she slept soundly until awakened by Madame Le Blanc at seven o’clock. Throughout the day Kay was kept busy, but by this time she was familiar enough with the dance routine, so that rehearsals were not as exhausting as before.

“Now that I have my evidence it seems foolish to remain here,” she reflected. “But I promised Mary Jane I would save her job, so I must. I only hope she received my letter and meets me tonight.”

The evening passed very slowly. Kay went to the attic bedroom at eight o’clock but although she turned out the

light she did not undress. By nine the entire house was in darkness.

Kay was beginning to fear that Mary Jane would not come when she heard creaking steps. She tiptoed to the door.

“Who is it?” she asked in a whisper.

There was no answer, but in another instant Mary Jane grasped her hand.

“You did receive my note!” Kay exclaimed joyfully.

“Yes, your mother sent Ronald Earle to look under the flat stone. He brought me here tonight and is waiting in the car. How did you get along, Kay?”

“Monsieur Le Blanc seemed satisfied with my dancing. He decided that I could be in the show—or rather, that you may go on. How is your ankle, Mary Jane?”

“Much better. See, I walk without limping now,” replied her double. “The doctor gave me permission to dance again if I am very careful.”

“You’ll get along all right then,” said Kay. “Monsieur Le Blanc worked us especially hard yesterday and today, and said we could have a part holiday tomorrow. Anyway, I doubt he’ll be in charge much longer.”

“Why, Kay, what do you mean?”

“I can’t tell you now, but you’ll hear in good time,” Kay answered mysteriously. “I think eventually I’ll have some very good news for you!”

“A wonderful thing has happened to me already,” Mary Jane confessed self-consciously. “I met Hal Peterson, and we’ve fixed up everything. He says he doesn’t mind waiting for me, no matter how long it will be.”

“I’m so glad,” declared Kay with a relieved sigh. “If I had been the cause of breaking up your friendship I never could have forgiven myself. You didn’t tell him about the mix-up?”

“No, and he never suspected! Some time I may tell him, but not for a while at least.”

“You hold the fort here until you hear from me,” Kay said hurriedly as she prepared to leave. “I must meet Ronald now, and I have important work ahead.”

“I feel very grateful for everything you have done.”

“I hope everything turns out the way I plan,” Kay returned with a flicker of uneasiness. “Oh, yes, just a word of warning. Don’t let the cleaning woman see the mole on your neck. She thinks you had it removed! Another thing, Madame Le Blanc suspects you may be Mary Jane Rue and she has learned your mother is in Brantwood.”

“Then it won’t be safe for me to remain here!”

“I doubt that she’ll bother you with questions for a while. She isn’t certain yet, and before she can learn the truth, we’ll

act!”

Leaving Mary Jane to ponder upon this remark, Kay squeezed her double’s hand in farewell and stole down the stairway. She let herself out of the dark house and ran to the road. Ronald’s car was parked a short distance from the grounds. As he opened the door for her, he peered intently into her face.

“Is this Mary Jane or Kay?” he asked.

“Can’t you tell, Ronald?”

“Well, you look so much like Mary Jane, I wonder myself. All this double business is giving me the jitters!”

“I had a rather bad case of them myself yesterday,” she replied with a laugh. “But right now I am sitting on top of the world!”

“That means you have solved the mystery?”

“Practically so, I think. While I was at the Huntley house I found evidence which proves that Lazarre, Madame Le Blanc’s brother, defrauded Mary Jane and her mother. They were entitled to the entire Huntley fortune, but Lazarre took the money for himself while saying he had turned it over to charities named in a fake will.”

“Does Mary Jane know the truth?”

“Not yet, Ronald. I thought I wouldn’t tell her until I have absolute assurance that the money will go to Trixie Rue.”

“Are both Monsieur Le Blanc and his wife implicated in the plot?” asked the young man.

“So far as I have been able to learn, Monsieur Le Blanc took no active part. He did allow his wife to use stolen funds in promoting their show.”

“All Brantwood will rock when this story gets out!” exclaimed Ronald. “Ethel Eaton has led everyone to believe that the Le Blancs are great society people.”

Kay smiled as she pictured how the Eatons would receive the news, then her face became serious again. She was confronted with many legal problems which were too knotty for her to solve without the help of a lawyer.

“If only Cousin Bill were home,” she murmured. “There are so many questions I should ask him before talking with the police.”

“Your own auto accident case will be coming up in court,” Ronald remarked thoughtfully.

“I have a little evidence, but not enough,” replied Kay, frowning. “Of course I could throw all the blame upon Mary Jane, but I don’t like to do that, for Mr. Craken would try to force her to pay a large sum if she should come into her inheritance. I feel certain he is a member of a group of men who prey upon innocent persons. They fake accidents and force people to pay heavy damages rather than go to court. Lazarre may be the ringleader, but this will not be easy to prove.”

When the couple arrived at the Tracey residence, Ronald and Kay alighted. They both noticed another automobile standing on the driveway.

“Why, that looks like Cousin Bill’s car!” exclaimed the girl, scarcely believing her eyes.

The two ran up the front steps into the house. There was the young lawyer in the dining room, eating a hearty meal which Mrs. Tracey had prepared for him. He sprang to his feet and clasped Kay in his arms.

“Thank goodness, you are home again, Cousin Bill!” she cried joyfully. “Where have you been all this time? Why didn’t you send word to us?”

“One question at a time, please,” he laughed, turning to shake hands with Ronald. “I thought you knew I had gone away to do a bit of sleuthing.”

“We suspected it but we weren’t sure. A great deal has happened here since you went away, Cousin Bill. Has Mother told you about the auto accident?”

“Yes, she was just telling the story when you arrived.”

“I’ve been accused of wrecking another car and I wasn’t even in an accident!” Kay said indignantly.

“The case is being brought to trial too!”

“Very interesting.”

“Interesting! It would be tragic if you weren’t here to take charge! But now that you have arrived my worries are over. You can tell Mr. Craken and that firm of crooked lawyers a thing or two!”

Bill Tracey smiled and shook his head.

“Surely you don’t think I should pay three thousand dollars to those men!” Kay exclaimed in astonishment. “I was depending upon you to defend me.”

“I will defend you, Kay,” returned her relative quietly.

“However, I regret to say there is no way for you to avoid standing trial.”

CHAPTER XXV

KAY FACES TRIAL

“Cousin Bill, you talk as if you were familiar with the case!” Kay exclaimed, rather shocked by the lawyer’s matter-of-fact announcement. “I’ve not told you the facts yet.”

“I already know something about it,” he replied. “As I’ve just explained to your mother, I left Brantwood to gain evidence against a group of racketeers who have preyed upon people likely to settle automobile damage suits out of court. Now I come home to learn that you have been a victim of the same group of men!”

“Did Mother show you the letter I received from Duster and Trout?”

“Yes, and from evidence in my possession I am satisfied the firm is working with Mr. Craken. The man has been involved in accidents of a similar nature before this. Unfortunately I haven’t enough proof to gain a conviction.”

“I have a paper which may interest you!” Kay cried suddenly. “I found it in a taxicab and forgot about it until this moment. Wait, I’ll get it.”

She ran upstairs, returning in a moment with the list of names and addresses bearing the strange notations “W”, “M”, “P”.

“Has this any significance?” she inquired.

“I should say it has! This is Craken’s handwriting—I have other samples of it!”

“My name is on the paper,” pointed out Kay. “Do you suppose it could be a list of prospective victims?”

“That’s exactly what it is. I recognize several of these names—persons who already have paid large claims.”

“I wonder what the letters ‘W’, ‘M’, ‘P’ mean? You notice there is an ‘M’ after mine.”

“Why, it stands for medium,” explained Cousin Bill.

“Wealthy, medium, poor. You were singled out as a victim having about an average amount of money.”

Kay told the young lawyer of the additional evidence which she had gathered, then ventured a remark that it might not be necessary for her to stand trial after all.

“On the contrary, it is more important than ever,” corrected Cousin Bill. “I wish to gain a conviction against these men, and you will be my most valuable witness. A good joke on me too, for while I went away to gather facts, my most vital evidence was awaiting me right here at home.”

As both Kay and the young lawyer had long stories to relate, it was well after midnight before they had pieced together the various clues. Realizing the significance of her testimony in court, the girl readily agreed to go through the ordeal.

In the morning Kay took her cousin to Mrs. Cary's cottage, intending to have him talk with Trixie Rue. They found the old lady in an excited state. She told them that during the night her patient had fled.

"I don't know what made Trixie run away, unless she was afraid of that man who came here," Mrs. Cary wailed. "She didn't leave a note or anything."

"You say a man came here?" inquired Cousin Bill quickly.

"Early last evening, Mr. Tracey. He was a foreigner. I heard Trixie call him Lazarre and she seemed to be afraid of him."

"Lazarre!" cried Kay. "Then that explains everything. He probably threatened her, so she ran away, fearing he might send her to jail."

"Have you any idea where the woman might have gone?" Cousin Bill asked Mrs. Cary.

"Not the slightest."

Although this turn of events was disturbing, the Traceys could do nothing about it at the moment.

"We have other work before us just now," said the lawyer. "Our first task will be to capture Lazarre and to bring about

the arrest of Madame Le Blanc and her husband.”

All that day Kay and Bill Tracey worked with the police, presenting their evidence and tracing down additional facts required for an iron-clad case. By nightfall a squad of plainclothesmen descended upon the Huntley mansion where not only the Le Blancs but Lazarre as well were captured.

Kay took Mary Jane home with her, and as gently as possible broke the news of her mother’s flight. She tried to quiet the girl’s fears by promising that as soon as the Craken-Lazarre trial was over she would devote all her energies toward locating the missing woman.

Cousin Bill was not mistaken in believing that Kay would prove to be his most valuable witness. Taking the stand in her own defense, she acted the role assigned her, pleading innocent to the charge of damaging another car, and even shedding a few tears for the benefit of the jury. Satisfied that the girl could offer no defense, the lawyers, Duster and Trout, brought forth their own dishonest witnesses who swore to untrue statements.

Cousin Bill enjoyed the situation immensely. At the proper moment he paraded his own evidence. He introduced Mary Jane, whose appearance electrified the courtroom. Then came Doctor Brown, the private detective who had guarded the Tracey home, and Binky. The latter had come forward to reveal that he had seen Kay taking a walk at the hour of the accident, and actually had considered snatching her purse, an act which he later did.

Bill Tracey did not allow Binky to disclose more than the fact that he had seen Kay at the time of the accident. He was confident that the evidence already presented would be more than enough to convince the jury.

A great load was lifted from everyone's shoulders, when at last the verdict was announced. Kay need pay no damages, nor would Mary Jane become involved in the case. The dishonest lawyers, Joe Craken, and the witnesses who had perjured themselves, were ordered held on criminal charges. Hal Peterson, another victim of the group, was completely exonerated. He had been threatened many times by Mr. Craken, who sought to make him pay damages for a fake auto accident.

Kay was even more elated when she learned that Lazzarre had signed a confession, not only admitting a connection with Joe Craken's dishonest schemes, but acknowledging he had deprived Trixie Rue and Mary Jane of the Huntley fortune. He revealed he had led the older woman to believe she was wanted by police on an old charge involving her business partner, while actually she had been absolved long ago.

A considerable amount of the Huntley fortune remained in Lazzarre's possession, but he agreed to return the money to the rightful heirs before beginning a prison sentence. The Le Blancs disappeared from Brantwood.

It remained for Kay to locate Trixie Rue, and the task was not an easy one. Advertisements in the local newspapers failed to attract the woman's attention. Apparently she had no knowledge of the fortune which awaited her.

Kay believed that sooner or later the former dancer would return to the Huntley estate. Often she and Mary Jane went to the sunken garden to watch and wait. One evening as they sat on a bench, they were startled to see a white-robed figure emerge from the pagoda and dance gracefully about the garden. Mary Jane sprang to her feet and called out excitedly:

“Mother! Mother!”

The graceful figure halted. The white robe slipped to the ground. Slowly Trixie Rue moved toward the girls, while her daughter ran to her, throwing her arms about her.

“We have searched everywhere for you,” she declared, tears of joy coming into her eyes. “Oh, Mother, you need never be afraid again!”

At first Trixie Rue could not believe the good fortune and it took a long while for the girls to convince her of the truth. As they led her back to the waiting car she murmured in a tired voice:

“It seems to me as if I am walking in a dream, and that any moment I may awaken. Yet I know it must be real, for you are with me again, Mary Jane.”

“Why did you return to dance in the garden, Mother?”

“I came back to the Huntley mansion hoping to find you, darling. As for my dancing, I have never been able to forget my love for it. One evening long ago I found a white robe in the pagoda. It had been left there by the Le Blancs who often

tried out dancing effects in the garden. Often I donned the costume and danced in the moonlight.”

“I saw you several times,” revealed Kay. “One night I heard a man singing.”

“Monsieur Le Blanc often used the robe,” explained Trixie Rue. “He would dance to the accompaniment of his own voice.”

A day of rest and relaxation at the Tracey home revived the woman’s strength. Then she and her daughter moved into the Huntley home which now belonged to them.

A new dance director was assigned to take charge of the girls for the show for which Le Blanc had been rehearsing. Ultimately, Mary Jane was destined to make an outstanding success, but in the meantime she took a great deal of pleasure in teaching Kay new dance steps. The girls worked out an eccentric number which delighted everyone privileged to see it.

“I wish we could give the dance at the charity show,” Kay declared impulsively. “It might be a drawing card. Goodness knows we need one.”

“Well, why not?” demanded her double, who would do any favor for her new friend. “We might call it a mystery number—a dance by Kay Tracey and her double!”

The idea appealed to Miss Grover, so posters went out immediately advertising the new attraction. To Ethel Eaton’s

chagrin public interest grew to such a point that every ticket soon was sold. Many persons who had intended to go to the moving picture show sponsored by the Eatons, decided to help both charities. But they would attend the benefit for the Children's Home!

Upon the night of the performance, Ethel, overcome by curiosity, could not remain away. She slipped into the back of the auditorium, hoping no one would see her and suffered intensely when Kay and Mary Jane covered themselves with glory. Following the show, Wilma and Betty Worth went to the dressing room to congratulate their friends and report that nearly two hundred dollars had been taken in.

"Everyone is saying that you are responsible for the success, Kay," declared Betty warmly.

"But that isn't right," protested Kay, smiling at Mary Jane. "My worthy double deserves half the credit. She worked even harder than I did to create the dance."

"Double, double, toil and trouble," quoted Wilma gaily, "Fire burn and cauldron bubble——"

"Toil and trouble, yes," agreed Kay, laughing at the couplet, "but every bit of it has been worth while. The show was a success, Mary Jane has a fortune, and the future is bright! Could anyone ask for a better conclusion?"

THE END

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- Silently corrected a few typos.
- Retained publication information from the printed edition: this eBook is public-domain in the country of publication.
- In the text versions only, text in italics is delimited by _underscores_.

[The end of *In the Sunken Garden* by Frances K. Judd]