

THE CHALET SCHOOL AND ROSALIE



ELINOR M.
BRENT-DYER

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The Chalet School and Rosalie

By

ELINOR M. BRENT-DYER

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TOM TACKLES THE CHALET SCHOOL—THE CHALET SCHOOL AND ROSALIE

Neither of these titles has been available for many years and, since both were originally published out of chronological order, readers may like some explanation of where the stories fit into the series.

Tom Tackles the Chalet School did not appear in book form until 1955—the year after *The Chalet School and Barbara* (No. 30)—but the story was in fact written much earlier and had originally been serialized in two Chalet School annuals during the late 1940s. Hence, although *Tom Tackles the Chalet School* is theoretically No. 31 of the series, the events in the story actually take place *before* those in *Three Go to the Chalet School*, officially No. 20; and the book, which might properly be given the number 19b, belongs to the ‘Armishire’ part of the series.

The Chalet School and Rosalie also belongs to this period in Chalet School history: its story continues that of *Tom Tackles the Chalet School* and immediately precedes *Three Go to the Chalet School*. It might therefore be considered No. 19c of the series; but for some reason now unknown the book was never published in hardback and appeared only in a limited paperback edition (published 1951). *The Chalet School and Rosalie* has been unobtainable for more than thirty years, so its inclusion now in the *Armada* series will be especially welcome.

H. M^cC.

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CHAPTER 1

Tom as Sheepdog

For the last ten minutes Tom had been fidgeting in her seat. She had lifted down her own case and her companion's; collected together their raincoats, magazines, and rugs; seen that packets of chocolate and some apples were put safely into the knapsack she carried on her back; then, having done everything she could to be ready, she had sat frowning and twisting until most of the people in the compartment could have shaken her with pleasure and her unfortunate charge was almost on the verge of tears. For, to her utter disgust, Tom had been captured by an anxious mother when her own had been seeing her off at York station who had begged her to "look after my daughter, please. She has never been to school in her life before, and I see you are a pupil of the Chalet School where she is going."

If left to herself, it is probable that Tom would have agreed so ungraciously that the lady would have hunted round for someone else to whom to entrust her precious child. But Tom's mother was there and, whatever her daughter might think of it, Mrs Gay had been a vicar's wife too long not to be ready to hold out a helping hand to anyone who needed it. So she had promptly replied that Tom would be only too pleased to help—what was her name?

"Rosalie—Rosalie Way. That would be so kind of you," Mrs Way said eagerly. "Rosalie, come here, darling! This is—Tom, did you say? Short for Thomasina, I suppose?—who will look after you."

Tom had gone deep puce with indignation, but her mother had hastily interjected, "Oh, no; *not* Thomasina. I'm afraid it's a nickname. But everyone calls her by it. Our name is Gay."

"Gay and Way!" Mrs Way exclaimed. "Why, what a coincidence!"

There had been no time for more. They had had to scramble into the carriage where Tom's things were already settled, and Rosalie's had to be tucked in somehow. Mrs Way enfolded her daughter in a loving embrace, while Tom submitted to a kiss from her mother. Finally, Rosalie was torn from her mother's arms, the porter slammed the door, and the train steamed out of the station with Tom standing at a manly salute, while Rosalie waved her handkerchief out of the window until the wide sweep of the rail curves bore them out of sight, when she had sunk down beside Tom.

That young lady had cast a hurried glance at her charge, seen the red, rather babyish lips quiver, and promptly jumped up and bundled Rosalie into her own corner, and handed her a magazine with the remark, "That'll keep you going till we get to Leeds."

"Th-thank you," Rosalie had quavered; and thereafter subsided behind the kindly shelter of *The Boys' Treasure Horde*—Tom's taste in literature was as masculine as her appearance—till the slow crawl into which the train had fallen had roused Tom's impatience. Then she laid the paper down after a last surreptitious scrub at her eyes, and said shyly, "Is the train late?"

"Seven minutes," Tom replied gloomily. "I don't know about you, but *I* don't want to be parked for three hours in Leeds station. And apart from that, we're supposed to be meeting Jacynth Hardy and Gay Lambert and, though they're smashing people usually, they'll be pretty sick with us if we make them miss the train."

"Who are they?" Rosalie asked, putting her sopping rag of a handkerchief into her pocket, and swallowing a last gulp. "Mistresses?"

Tom hooted with laughter. “No fear! *Prefects*—Gay runs the games; and Jacynth is to be second pree this term as Mary Turner has left. Oh, thank goodness! We’re just coming into the station! Grab your case and stand by to scoot as soon as she stops. With luck we’ll do it yet!”

Rosalie was too much overawed to refuse, and the result was that when the train drew up alongside the platform where Jacynth Hardy was standing waiting impatiently, the pair of them almost fell out of the compartment. As they stopped exactly opposite her, she saw the whole performance, and was on them like a hawk.

“Tom Gay!” she exclaimed. “I might have known it! Who is this? Well, never mind this moment; we’ll have to run for the train. Over the bridge and down to number fifteen platform. Gay’s gone on ahead to bag a carriage for us. Is this all your luggage? Then come on!”

Jacynth strode ahead, followed by the two younger girls, and by dint of racing they just contrived to reach the door of the compartment where Gay Lambert was dancing up and down.

“In you go!” she exclaimed. “Shove that case along, Tom, and don’t argue. Come on, Jac!”

“All the seats in here are taken,” Tom objected, looking at the seats, which held two ladies, an elderly man, and a small girl, as well as sundry cases and bundles of rugs.

“Don’t be an ass! These are ours,” Gay said shortly as she swept the rugs and cases off, and proceeded to pack them into the racks. “Sit down at that side, Tom. Who’s this you’ve got with you?”

“A new girl—Rosalie Way,” Tom said.

Dimples dipped in Gay’s cheeks, and her blue eyes danced. “Gay and Way! And we’ve Primrose Day at school. And to crown all, here’s Joanna Reay who lives opposite to us at home, and is coming along.” And she waved her hand at the small girl who was staring at them with boot-button eyes of brown as if she had never seen such queer creatures in her life.

“We’re off,” observed Jacynth as she settled herself in the corner. “And now, young Tom, I want to know what you meant by tumbling out of the train the way you did. You’re a public nuisance, if not a danger, doing things like that!”

Rosalie turned horrified eyes on Jacynth, but Tom had not been at the Chalet School for a term for nothing, so she grinned before she replied with becoming meekness, “I’m sorry, Jacynth. The train was late and I was so afraid we’d miss this one, so I was ready to jump at once.”

“I see. Well, don’t do it again. You might have had a nasty accident. Now you and Rosalie and Joanna can chatter together.” Jacynth dismissed her junior with dignity, and turned to Gay, who was in the corner seat opposite, while the three younger girls were all on Jacynth’s side.

Tom eyed Joanna doubtfully. She was two or three years younger than herself and Rosalie. Joanna herself was not troubled with shyness. She had a dozen or more questions to ask, and she began at once.

“I say, what’s the school like?”

“Wizard!” Tom returned.

“It’s biggish, isn’t it? I mean, my prep was a small thing—only about forty kids. How many are there at the Chalet?”

“Not an earthly—somewhere around two hundred, I think,” Tom answered.

“Not really?” The deep dismay in Rosalie’s voice as she spoke was a queer contrast with Joanna’s perky smugness.

“Well, we don’t have to be with the whole crowd all the time,” Tom said cheerfully. “There’s only twenty-seven or so in our form.”

Rosalie turned anxious blue eyes on this odd-looking girl and asked, "Oh, do you think *I'll* be in your form?"

"Ask me another! You may—or you may not. All depends," Tom answered.

"What about me?" Joanna demanded.

"How old are you—ten? Oh, you'll be a Junior. I'll speak to Betsy Lucy or one of that crowd and tell them to give you a lift if you need it."

"Aren't you a Junior, then? Won't you be with me—in a higher form?"

"No, I'm a Middle," Tom told Joanna aloofly. "So will Rosalie be."

"What's the difference, then?"

"Juniors have different common rooms, and they use only the Junior Library. They go to bed earlier than we do; and they don't play hockey."

Joanna made a face. "It sounds mouldy! Will Rosalie play hockey? She looks as if pat-ball with a soft ball 'ud be more *her* style."

"Here!" Tom fired up at this, though she was not greatly attracted to Rosalie. "Rosalie's older than you by a bit, and will take a higher place in the school. You hold your tongue and don't be cheeky!"

Joanna stared. "Oh, sorry! Didn't know she was a pal of yours."

Rosalie's pink-and-white face went pink all over at this, though *she* had not been especially attracted to Tom up till now. Rosalie was a very feminine little person, and she had never, in her life, met anyone quite like Tom Gay. To be truthful, that was how Tom had struck a good many of the girls when she first went to school. As for Tom herself, she had come to a girls' school under protest, and prepared to find girls "soppy" and not apt to live up to the gentlemanly notions her father had rubbed into her all her life. The first part of last term had been spent by all concerned in reshaping their ideas. After that, Tom had found her niche, and fitted it exactly.

Looking at her special charge, Tom had a shrewd idea that Rosalie would have quite as much difficulty as herself in settling down, though the trouble would be different. With some idea of helping her as well as of administering a well-deserved snub to Miss Joanna, she turned deliberately and said, "What sort of a school have you been at, Rosalie?"

"I haven't been at school at all," Rosalie replied in her soft, rather frightened tones. "At least, you couldn't *call* it a school—not really. It was at the rectory, and there were only the rectory girls and Gertrude and Winifred Walters—their father is our doctor—and me. And last term there was a girl whose father was stationed at the aerodrome three miles away—Jonny Agnew. Then Mr Herbert—that's the rector—went to another living, so of course the girls went too, and Miss Miller our tutor left—the girls are going to boarding school—so Daddy and Mummy said it was time I went too. And so I'm coming to the Chalet School."

"What about the others?" asked Joanna, not noticeably crushed by Tom's intended snub.

"Gertrude and Win are going to a school in Bexhill, and will live with their Grannie who lives there," Rosalie replied. "Wing-Commander Agnew was moved just before we broke up for Easter, and I don't know what's happened to Jonny."

"Well," Tom said judicially, "I think you were right. You couldn't call *that* a school—just six or seven of you. How many rectory girls?"

"Four—Madge and Bess, who are twins and my age; then Nan, who is eleven; and Ruth, the baby. She's only seven."

"What *is* your age?" the irrepressible Joanna demanded.

“Thirteen in June,” Rosalie answered her. “Madge and Bess were thirteen in March.” She turned to Tom with a timid look. “You’re thirteen too, aren’t you?”

“Not till August,” Tom told her. “It’s rather a pity your Madge and Bess didn’t come with you. You’d have had someone you know to stick to then. Know where they’ve gone?”

Rosalie shook her head. “They’re not going till September. The new rectory is in Hampshire, somewhere on the coast, and they’re not far from Southampton, so they’re going to day school there for this term. I had a letter from Madge last week. She said she and Bess and Nan were all going to boarding school in September, but Ruth will stay at the day school till she’s eleven.”

“What was that other girl’s proper name?” Joanna asked, “—the one you called Jonny?”

Rosalie laughed shyly. “It was really Jonquil. Yes; really!” For Tom was staring at her with disbelief in her honest grey eyes. “She is Jonquil Viola Agnew. Isn’t it *dreadful!*”

“Worse than mine!” Tom agreed.

“What is yours?” Joanna asked, curiosity in those round brown eyes of hers that were as bright as if they had been polished. “I heard that girl, Jacynth, call you Tom. But that couldn’t be any girl’s name.”

“Well, it’s mine,” Tom said brusquely.

“You mean you were *christened* that?”

Tom couldn’t tell a lie. “No, I wasn’t. But it’s all that matters to you,” she told her inquisitor curtly. “So far as *you’re* concerned, I’m Tom, and that may do you!”

Rosalie shrank back, though she, too, had been intrigued by the name. However, it was clear that Tom had no intention of revealing her real name, and not for worlds would the new Middle have invited a snub. Not so Joanna, though. That young woman was known at home as “Query”, and she was dying to know what Tom’s real name could be.

“Go on!” she said. “You needn’t hide it. I’ll soon know what it is when we get to school, ’cos I’ll hear the teachers calling you by it.”

Gay, who had been gossiping with Jacynth up to this, suddenly took a hand. “Oh no, you won’t!” she told Joanna severely. “And stop asking so many questions. It’s jolly rude of you. And while I think of it, we don’t call the staff “teachers”—we call them “mistresses”. So don’t let me hear you doing it again. Jacynth, isn’t it time we had something to eat? Let’s have lunch. We shan’t reach Crewe for another hour or so.”

“Brainwave!” Jacynth jumped up and lifted down a picnic basket. “Get your eats, you people.”

No Middle or Junior ever needed to be told *that* twice! They got down their cases, and while the older folk went to the dining car, the Chalet School crowd had a picnic meal which they thoroughly enjoyed. When they had finished, they broke up into their natural components, and the Seniors continued their talk about cricket and tennis and the public exams, while the younger ones plied Tom with more questions about the school—or, to be truthful, Joanna did the questioning. Rosalie was still too shy to venture much; but shyness was something unknown to Joanna Reay and she drove Tom nearly mad with her gadfly queries.

What were the dormitories like?—What form was Tom herself in, and in which form did she think Joanna was likely to be?—Who was the form mistress, and was she a sport? What about the other mistresses?—What games did they play in the summer?—Was there any swimming?—Who were the girls of whom Tom had spoken who would help her out?

Finally, Tom revolted. "I'm not answering another question!" she snapped. "You've asked about a thousand already. Rosalie has scarcely asked one. I'll tell you something, though, young Joanna. You're a lot too cheeky, and unless you pipe down a bit, your crowd will give you the dickens of a time if I know anything about them! Now shut up, and let someone else do the talking!"

Gay, attracted by the tone of Tom's voice, had overheard part of this. She looked at Joanna with a sarcastic smile. "I thought I'd warned you about pestering people with questions?" she said gently.

Joanna squirmed under her look, and went red. "I've got to ask about the things I want to know," she mumbled.

"I dare say. But you've been asking ever since Tom and what's-her-name joined us. Give your tongue a rest and other folk a chance until we get to Crewe."

Thus adjured, Joanna sat in sulky silence, while Tom talked Middles gossip solidly to Rosalie until they reached Crewe, when they all had to make a rush from the train, along the underground viaduct, and up to another station platform, where they were met by a small crowd of girls and a tall young mistress whom the two prefects and Tom addressed as "Miss Slater", and were all bundled into the train for Armiford, the nearest station for Howells Village, above which the school was situated. There, while Tom took Rosalie with her, and they joined four or five other girls of their own age, Gay and Jacynth went off with two other prefects, and Joanna was assigned to a flibbertigibbet of nine named Kitty Gordon, and packed into the compartment where Miss Slater sat in a corner and knitted industriously as she chatted with the small girls.

"Thank goodness!" breathed Tom fervently as she settled down. "I'll give you a hand when you need it, Rosalie, but I'm hanged if I'm going to be nanny to a brat of ten that needs squashing every ten minutes or so to make it even bearable! What have you been doing for the hols, you crowd? Come on! Let's have the news!"

CHAPTER 2

The Form Eleven

Rosalie awoke next morning with a feeling that aeons of time and thousands of miles separated her from home. So much had happened since the time when she had kissed her mother goodbye and sat down opposite Tom Gay in that train at York, that it hardly seemed possible that less than twenty-four hours could have passed.

“If only I could have been in the same room as Tom!” she thought as she lay in bed, staring rather forlornly at the pretty crocus-strewn curtains that separated her from the girl on either side.

That was the worst part of it all. Tom had taken her to Miss Wilson, one of the two Heads, when they had arrived at Plas Howell, the great mansion where the Chalet School had found a home some years before. “Bill”, as Rosalie found the school at large called the lady, had welcomed her cordially, and rejoiced her heart by informing her that she would be in Upper Third—which form Tom also adorned—and also in St Clare’s, the same house. *But*—and it was a big but—Tom was in what was called “Blue South”, and Rosalie, when Tom took her to Matron, had been placed in “North Yellow”, quite at the other end of the house, and on another floor. It is true three other ornaments of Upper Third slept there too—Nora Bird, Amy West, and Anne Webster—but they were complete strangers, and after the long journey together Rosalie felt that Tom was not.

She had been so upset she might have burst into tears but Tom had been on the look-out for this and promptly checked it by saying, “Oh well, it’s a jolly decent dormy. And thank goodness you aren’t like a baby to howl over a thing like that. We’ll see lots of each other during the day—too much, most likely! I’ll take you up, and see if I can find any of our crowd hanging about, and get them to keep an eye on you.”

“Any of our crowd” had resolved itself into Anne Webster, a girl of their own age, with a pleasant manner and a pleasant face, who had instantly taken the shy Rosalie under her wing when Tom had to depart to her own quarters. But Rosalie slept towards the far end of the great room, and Anne, as dormitory prefect, had the cubicle near the window at the other end. The people on either side of the new girl were Amy West and Margaret Jones who were also in Upper Third.

Rosalie was the only new girl in the dormitory, for the Chalet School did not encourage new arrivals in the last term of the school year, so there were rarely many of them, and this term was no exception. Besides herself and Joanna, there were only three other Juniors, and another Middle, a girl of nearly fifteen, who should have come two terms before but for an accident which had kept her at home till this one. Edris Lyall was a Senior Middle, and would have little to do with people like Rosalie and Tom. Also, although she had been allowed to come to school, she was still under the doctor’s care, and must have certain stated hours of lying flat on her back, so Matron had put her into one of the little dormitories which held only two or three people.

“I do wonder if I shall like it,” Rosalie thought miserably. “Oh, dear! *Why* did Mr Herbert have to take another living?”

The rolling crash of a great gong sounded through the mansion at that moment, and there came sounds of disgust on all sides.

“Oh, dear! A quarter to seven already! I’m sure I haven’t had half enough sleep!”

“At home Mummy leaves me to sleep till half past eight. She says growing girls *need* sleep!”

“I dare say!” came in jeering tones in answer to this. “What time do you go to bed, I’d like to know?”

Rita Anderson was known to keep the most unholy hours at home, thanks to a pair of the most absurdly indulgent parents that ever existed, so a chuckle went round the dormitory at this telling remark. Rita subsided into sulky silence, and there were sundry thuds as people left their beds.

“Hurry up, Rita!” called Anne Webster. “You’re on the first bath list. So are you, Amy, and so is the new girl, Rosalie Thingummy. You might take her with you and show her where to go.”

After that, as Rosalie found, it was a scramble to get dressed, strip her bed, and throw up the cubicle curtains before the melodious notes of the great gong sounded again, summoning them downstairs for breakfast, which was at half past seven.

Feeling very strange and new in her brown tunic, white blouse, and brown and flame-colour tie, with her long, fair ringlets tied back with brown ribbons, Rosalie followed the others out of the dormitory, sandwiched between Anne Webster and Nora Bird, and found herself marching along the corridor, down the school stairs, and into the big dining room, where she was greeted by Tom, who yanked her to a seat beside herself.

Then the staff filed in, some of them coming to take duty at the various tables, the rest going to the high table where Miss Wilson sat at the head; and after grace, breakfast began.

“I thought we’d have to do practice or something before brekker.” This was, of course, Joanna, who was also at their table.

“So we used,” Clare Danvers, one of the prefects who took their table, good-naturedly explained. “We used to have it at half past eight, and people practised, or did gardening or extra prep before. But one or two people couldn’t stand it, so it was changed round. We have brekker first and do our chores after.”

“Do *you* learn music?” Rosalie ventured to ask Tom during a pause in the general chatter round the table.

Tom grinned. “No fear! A mouth-organ or a tin whistle’s about the only thing I could ever perform on, and they don’t teach ’em here.”

“I’ve learned the piano,” Rosalie ventured. “I’m to go on with it here. I know, ’cos Mummy said so.”

“Rather you than me! And that goes for all the piano folk—the mistresses, I mean. I should think anyone who tried to teach me that would go crackers before half term! I say, you’d better hurry up with your bread and marmalade. Miss Wilson’ll be saying grace presently, and it’s always a sickener to have to stay behind to finish up; but Mately makes you.”

Rosalie felt that it *would* be “a sickener” to have to sit down while everyone else was leaving the room to finish, so she hurriedly bolted what was left on her plate, and was ready when Miss Wilson gave the signal to rise. Then she found that they had to hurry upstairs, make their beds and tidy their cubicles, and after that, everyone was told to go to her form room. This was first morning, so practice and other before-school activities were in abeyance. Instead, the girls held form meetings to discuss games teams. After that, there would be Prayers at nine o’clock, followed by form-work till eleven, when they had “elevenses”. This

being the first day, they would go for a walk after that if the weather were fine. In the afternoon there would be games practices, and if it rained, then they had art, handwork, and needlework. The next day lessons would be very much the same, for the first two days of every term were periods of preparation, and work started “fair” on the first Monday.

Anne Webster very kindly showed her how to tackle the bed, warning her that after the first day or two Mately would think nothing of coming and yanking her out of any lesson if it were not done to her satisfaction.

“So it’s really best to do it right at first,” Anne wound up. “The staff are so ghastly if that happens.”

Thanks to this, Rosalie made her bed carefully, dusted her small domain thoroughly, and left all spotlessly tidy before she went with Anne downstairs to the pleasant, sunny room which belonged to Upper Third.

Here she found a bevy of girls of her own age, all talking excitedly. Tom was the centre of one group which consisted of a pair of long-haired, very pretty people of thirteen who were plainly twins; a slim child with short, curly flaxen locks and blue eyes who had been presented to her the evening before by Tom with: “This is Primrose Day. Primrose, this is Rosalie Way. And there’s a new Junior who wants oodles of sitting on called Joanna Reay. Isn’t it a rag?”; a brown-haired girl whose big blue-grey eyes beamed from behind enormous glasses; a fairylike creature who certainly deserved her name of “Elfie”; and a slender, very dark person who was new to her, but whom she later heard addressed as Nicole de Saumarez.

“Which will you play, Rosalie?” Bride, the girl with glasses, presently asked. “Tennis or cricket.”

Rosalie glanced at Tom for guidance. That young woman was busy having an argument with the twins, and did not see her, so the new girl had to stand on her own feet. She temporized.

“I—I don’t quite understand,” she said.

With a final, “You *are* a pair of asses, you two!” Tom turned to her charge to demand, “What don’t you understand?”

“I just asked which she was going to play,” Bride explained.

“Oh, yes. Of course. We all have lessons in both,” Primrose said, “but we specialize in one. Which do you like best? I prefer tennis, but Bride and Tom are crackers on cricket.”

Now Rosalie had never played cricket in her life, but she had had quite a good deal of tennis with the other girls under the instruction of Miss Miller, herself an excellent amateur. However, the silly child was so anxious to be with Tom in everything, that Primrose’s gossip decided her, and she said, “I’d like to learn cricket if I could.”

Primrose naturally took it that the new girl knew nothing much about either game, and so did the other two. As a result, when Elfie, who was form games prefect, demanded, “Which will Rosalie play?” Tom told her, “She’s going to have a shot at cricket,” and that settled it.

Bride, as form prefect, banged on the mistress’s desk for silence and, when she got it, announced briefly, “We’re going to choose our cricket eleven and the tennis four. Sit down, everyone, and stop talking, please. Oh, and see you have some paper and pencils.”

Everyone but Elfie, who joined Bride on the little platform, sat down, Tom pulling Rosalie to share the dual desk at which she sat. Then Bride said, “Elfie will talk to you,” and perched herself on the mistress’s desk.

Elfie looked round eagerly. “I hope you’ll all go in for both as much as you can, but as we’re supposed to do more at one than another, will you please write your name on a piece of

paper, and then put underneath the game you want to play most.”

Tom produced paper and pencil for Rosalie, and then wrote her name and “cricket” in a firm hand on her own slip. Barbara Smith, a solemn-faced person of thirteen, collected them, and Bride and Elfie sorted them out quickly into two heaps. They were fairly evenly divided, though perhaps the cricket heap was a little larger than the tennis. Bride counted them while Elfie attended to the tennis, and the result was announced.

“Fifteen people want cricket, and the rest tennis,” Elfie said. “O.K.! You’ll all have to go to practices of each, you know; but you’ll get one extra of your own choice. And, of course, we can always fit in odd goes when the courts or the nets aren’t bagged by the Seniors.”

“What about the Eleven and the Four?” someone asked, and there was a little stir of excitement among the girls.

“Well, of course, we have two of last year’s Upper Third eleven and five of Lower Third,” Elfie said. “Some of you may have come on a lot since then, though; and we have girls who weren’t here last summer. I vote we have a kind of match, eight a side, with Bride Bettany to play for both as she was best at cricket last year. Then we can pick a—a sort of eleven for the time being until we see if anyone’s better than the ones we thought. And the same with the tennis.”

“Wizard idea!” Vanna Ozanne remarked.

“The only thing,” observed Bride herself, “is that Burnie has a lot to say in the matter, and she mayn’t like the ones we choose.”

Elfie cocked her head on one side. “D’you think so, Bride? She’s awfully decent about letting us try our way first.”

“Oh, she’ll do that all right,” Bride agreed. “Remember what she said to Judy Rose last September—we’ve got to learn to use our—our judgment, because the day’s coming fast enough when we’ll have to help in picking the school team, so the sooner we get practice, the better.”

“When can we begin?” Primrose Day demanded.

“Cricket, not till we’re told,” Elfie said. “The hard courts are all marked out now, though. I don’t suppose they’ll let us do much with the grass for the present—too muddy after all last week’s rain.”

“There’s the bell for walks!” someone exclaimed. “Come on! Don’t let’s be late, or there may be a row.”

They streamed off to the cloakrooms, which, so Rosalie learned later on, were called the Splashes, where they got into brown top coats, brown berets, outdoor shoes, and brown gloves, for though the morning was bright and sunny there was a chilly breeze blowing from the north. Out on the drive, they found various big girls waiting for them, and were quickly walked off, form by form, with a prefect in charge.

The grounds at Plas Howell were large ones, and, where the younger girls were concerned at any rate, they often took their morning walk within the boundaries of the place. On this first morning, while the Kindergarten were marched down the wide avenue, some of the Juniors went off to the little spinney which ran up one side of the hill on which the mansion had been built while the rest were led round the playing fields at a brisk trot by two prefects. The Junior Middles were sent up to the top of the hill, and over the crest, down the other side to a white-painted fence on the other side of which stretched ploughed fields, and then round till they reached the garden again. They were in charge of Welsh Gwensi Howell and Daisy Venables,

the ex-games prefect. Daisy had a very important exam this term, so, by the advice of people who knew, had resigned her post, and Gay Lambert now held it.

Bride had turned to Tom when they were on the drive to ask eagerly, "Be my partner for this walk?"

Tom had shaken her head. "Not today; I'm going to partner young Rosalie. Next week, shall we? What about Wednesday and Friday?"

Bride, a sunny-tempered young person, nodded, and then was grabbed by a jolly-looking girl who had been addressed as Nancy, and welcomed vociferously. Tom had explained that she was Nancy Chester who had been absent all the previous term, owing to an accident.

"So this is the first time I've seen her myself," Tom had wound up.

Rosalie, walking with Tom, thought that Nancy looked a delightful person, with her sunny, golden-brown hair and deep grey eyes. She had learned that she was a sister of Beth Chester, the Head Girl, and it was clear that she was a great favourite.

"Did you play much cricket?" Tom asked Rosalie curiously when they were well away. "I should have thought you'd have had more tennis."

"Well, I suppose we did," Rosalie owned unwillingly, "but I've always longed to play cricket, so I thought I'd put my name down for it."

"That's mad," Tom said bluntly. "You'll get a certain amount of cricket whether you like it or not, just as I've got to put in a certain amount of time at tennis, though I think it's a loathsome game. If you've done much of it, though, you ought to have shoved your name down for it." She surveyed Rosalie's slight, well-poised figure thoughtfully. "I shouldn't wonder if you weren't quite decent at it, and able to do a lot with coaching."

"I want to do cricket decently," Rosalie said rebelliously. "I've never had a chance of it before. I'm sure I'll love it when I do begin, but I expect I'll need lots and lots of practice at it first."

"Oh, have all the practice you want," Tom agreed. "All the same, unless you're a heaven-sent genius at it—and I don't expect you are; you don't look like it," she added in parenthesis—"if you've any sense you'll stick to the game you know best, and play up at it, too."

"I don't see why. Why shouldn't I just play cricket if I want to?"

"Well, sooner or later, if you stay here, you'll be a Senior, and they are the ones that make up most of the teams. You've always got to think of that," Tom explained.

Rosalie, the home bird, stared. However, she was wise enough to say nothing, and Tom, also wise in her generation, dropped the subject with the reflection that the games mistress and the Games Committee would soon find out which was Rosalie's game, and then she would have to work at that. Meantime, the big question for Tom herself was, had she any chance of a place in the form eleven?

CHAPTER 3

Shock For Tom

In the event, Tom got into the Upper Third eleven with little difficulty, as might have been expected of a girl whose father had brought her up almost like a boy. She had been well and truly coached in cricket ever since she could hold a bat and throw a ball. As a batsman she was nothing out of the ordinary, as the form soon found. She could be relied on to keep her head, and was a fine stone-waller, enough to break the heart of any keen bowler; but it was in bowling that she came into her own. She was master of two balls: one, a tremendously swift one, guaranteed to terrify a nervous batsman, though if you could get up heart enough to play back to it, you could usually do something with it; the other was a slow, tricky thing, breaking to leg with a deceptive little curl which just came at the end. As Mr Gay had been very keen on varying pace, he had taught Tom to get wickets by just this thing. She was a neat field, too, and, thanks to her father's training, could throw a straight ball.

Miss Burn, summing her up to the Games Committee when that august body met for an important job, said that in three or four years' time Tom would be a real gift from heaven for any cricket captain if she only kept up her present standard.

"We'll jolly well see that she does so far as we are concerned," Gay said briskly. She turned to Daisy, who might have given up the games prefectship, but still came to committee meetings. "What do you think, Daisy?"

"No need to worry," Daisy replied briskly. "Tom's got the *root* of the matter in her—thanks to that father of hers. The real headache with that lot is going to be—"

"Rosalie Way?" Gay queried.

Daisy shook her head. "No, the little ninny wants to play cricket because it's new to her, and kids of that age are rather apt to run after anything fresh," she said in an elderly way. "The real worry is going to be young Elfie."

"Elfie? Why on earth?" Gay demanded, staring at her.

"Have you forgotten what happened last term? Elfie's ankle is very queasy still, and Uncle Jem says she's not to attempt either cricket or tennis until half term anyhow. She's to have massage and electrical treatment for the present, and at half term they'll see how it is. But," demanded Daisy dramatically, "have you ever thought how Elfie is going to take *that*?"

"Lawks!" Gay looked at her with consternation. "Elfie has always been among the pick of that bunch for tennis, and she's quite a good wicket-keeper. *And*," as the inwardness of it all began to dawn on her, "the kid has always said she wanted to be a games mistress, and her whole heart is in games! Yes, Daisy, my lamb, you are right! We shan't have a very cheery time with young Elf when she hears all this. Does she know it at all, by the way?"

"Uncle Jem said not," Daisy replied. "She was awfully good about being out of it all last term, but no one expects her to be a little angel when she learns that it's got to go on like this."

At this point Miss Burn decided to take a hand. "It's rough luck on Elfie," she agreed, "but she'll just have to put up with it. After all, two terms of doing without games and gym isn't going to spoil her career, and she's quite a sensible little soul. Oh, I don't say the news isn't going to be a bad disappointment to her; but she's got plenty of time yet—she's only thirteen now. That's enough about that. At the moment, I understood that this meeting was called to decide about our match dates for the term. Forget Elfie and Co., and get down to the job!"

Thus recalled, the Committee forgot Elfie, and turned to the question of how they were to fit in their various matches.

Meanwhile, Tom, having achieved the Form eleven, felt that life held nothing further for her at present. This being the case and, since we rarely know unmixed happiness, Fate put an oar in, and Tom got a shock.

That April and the early May were proving kind months so far as weather was concerned. The sun shone early and long; the cricket pitches dried and before long were in a state for use. Both cricket and tennis were speedily in full swing, and Rosalie soon learned that while practice can do a good deal unless you are born hopelessly bad at games, it can hardly be expected to make a cricketer of you at once if you have never played before.

“No, your game is tennis,” Miss Burn said after watching her efforts critically. “You have it in you to be really good at that. Do your best at compulsory cricket, of course; but on the whole, if you’re wise, you will stick to tennis. I’ll put you down for extra at that, and take you off the cricket.”

You couldn’t argue with Miss Burn, even if you weren’t a very diffident new girl like Rosalie Way. Rosalie never tried. She only said. “Yes, Miss Burn,” meekly, and then accepted her dismissal while that young lady turned her attention to Moira Fitzpatrick, who had ricked an ankle that day but saw no reason why she shouldn’t have her usual nets practice for all that!

Rosalie was supposed to go to play a set of tennis with three other members of the form, but she forgot her appointment once she was clear of the remedial room and slipped off to the shrubbery at one side of the house, where she found a nook among the bushes and curled herself up in it to enjoy being miserable all alone.

Here Gay Lambert found her half an hour later, and promptly asked why she wasn’t where she ought to be. Also, why was she crying?

Rosalie flushed, and turned her head away. She had had time to realize that girls of thirteen don’t cry at school for things like not playing the game the girl they most admired played. Above all, she was shy of Gay who, though a most friendly person, could say nipping things when she chose. She rather dreaded the direct gaze of the speedwell-blue eyes which were regarding her so steadfastly.

Gay suddenly plumped down beside her on the ground. “Look here,” she said, “has anyone been beastly to you?”

Rosalie shook her head. You couldn’t exactly say Miss Burn had been beastly; and even if she had been, you couldn’t say that sort of thing to a prefect, either.

“A bit homesick?” suggested Gay, that being the next idea in her mind.

“No,” Rosalie said. “I’m not homesick—or not frightfully.”

“Then what’s wrong? You may as well tell me,” she added with a keen eye on the younger girl’s flushed face and swollen eyes, “for I shall stay here till I do know. Come on, Rosalie! What’s the trouble?”

Rosalie decided she had better tell the truth—or part of it, anyway. “Miss Burn says I must do extra tennis and not cricket,” she said.

“That’s rather what I thought myself,” Gay nodded. “You know, for your age, you’re quite good at tennis. You want weight and strength, of course; but that’ll come. Now you’ve never done cricket at all, and I’ve had you three times at the nets myself, and I should say you don’t really shape that way in the least. But you *could* be jolly good at tennis.”

“But I *want* to play cricket—I want it most awfully,” Rosalie blurted out.

Gay's pretty face under its mop of golden curls became very serious. "I wonder why?" she said gently.

Rosalie twisted her hands together uncomfortably. "Oh, I don't know," she said. "I've wanted to play it for ages, and it seems such a good chance now I'm where it *is* played."

It was a good excuse but something in her voice lacked conviction and Gay was quite sharp enough to see it. However, she felt she could scarcely question the new girl any further, so all she said was, "Well, you'd better go and wash your face and then come along with me. I found Bride and the Ozannes lamenting your absence so I shoved Anne Webster into your place. Now I must find another set for you. And don't cry over things like that, either. They're honestly not worth howling about!" With which highly ungrammatical remark she rose to her feet, dusted down her skirt, and waited for Rosalie to follow her example.

That young person stumbled up, and followed the prefect to the nearest Splashery, where she bathed her red eyes with the cold water, and felt decidedly better when finally she was following Gay once more, this time to the courts. Here, she was roped in to make up a set with Primrose Day, Sybil Russell, who was the daughter of Lady Russell to whom the school belonged, and Tom Gay, who played under protest, but played just the same—Miss Burn saw to that!

It was something she saw in Rosalie's face when she was told to partner Tom that helped Gay to understand what it was all about, and she pursed up her lips in a soundless whistle. So *that* accounted for the milk in the coconut! Gay suddenly gave a little secret grin. What on earth would Tom make of it? Or would she understand? Gay doubted it. Tom was far too much of a boy, in her estimation, either to understand or sympathize with such a situation.

"In fact," thought the games prefect as she prepared to score for the set, "I think myself it'll put her completely off the kid. Oh lawks! Why, if the silly little ass *must* get up a crush on someone, couldn't she pitch on a girl who would treat it with a little *kindness*, anyhow? Tom Gay is the last person to have the smallest sympathy with such things!"

All unaware of what their Senior was thinking, the four played their game, Tom and Rosalie against Primrose and Sybil. Like Tom, Primrose, the sister of five brothers, preferred cricket to tennis; but Sybil was good for her age—just eleven—so the pairs were evenly matched. It ended in victory for Tom and Rosalie, but only just. Then, her duty done, Gay sent them to change for tea, and departed to seek the companionship of her own peers.

"What's the matter, Rosalie?" asked Primrose inquisitively.

"Nothing," Rosalie said, staring. She had forgotten her grievance for the time being. "Why?"

"Only your eyes look funny—as if you'd been crying," Primrose explained. "Have you had a row with anyone? Miss Edwards can be awfully sarky over maths when she likes. And Mlle Berné is sometimes the *limit*!"

Rosalie reddened. "It's all right. I—I—I—got something in my eye." It wasn't really true, but she knew that you couldn't go round admitting you'd been crying; not at school.

"That's vile," Tom said. "Makes you feel so rotten when your eye's streaming and hurting like mad. Is it out now?"

"It's all right, thanks," Rosalie said quickly.

"OK! Come on then, you folk, and let's get changed. I hope your eye hasn't given you a headache, Rosalie?" Primrose added. She was a nice child, if she did suffer from fits of curiosity.

“No, it’s quite all right,” Rosalie said, feeling rather mean about it all, for she knew that Tom, at any rate, wouldn’t have wasted sympathy over her if the girls had known the real cause of the redness of her eyes.

They parted, to meet again at the tea table, and when the meal was over, they wandered out into the garden till the bell should call them in for preparation. Tom strolled off with her usual crowd—Bride Bettany, Anne Webster, Elfie Woodward, and the Ozanne twins. Elfie was holding forth, with a good deal of fluency and point, about the meanness of Miss Burn in forbidding her games and gym. Rosalie wandered along the drive, kicking at the gravel, and feeling lonely and miserable again. Then someone called Bride off to see her Aunt Jo, who had come up to the school for a visit to the two Heads, who had had the joy of teaching *her* in her eventful youth. The Ozannes were summoned by Matron to explain—if they could—why they had put unmended stockings in their drawers. Anne and Elfie went off on some ploy of their own, and Tom, looking round, caught sight of her charge all by herself.

With a shout of, “Hi, Rosalie!” she went racing over the lawn, and fetched up beside Rosalie. “Why are you meandering about by yourself like this?” she demanded. “Come on! We’ll take a run to the first gates. There’s just time before the bell goes. Off!” And she set off herself, scudding down the drive at full tilt. Rosalie ran after her because she could think of nothing else to do but her heart wasn’t in it and Tom had reached the gates and turned back before she was halfway there.

Rosalie saw her and stopped. Tom came racing up, flushed, but breathing easily and evenly, head up, arms well in to her sides, her boyishly short curls tossing into her eyes.

“Can’t you run better than that?” she asked laughingly. “You won’t do much at cricket if you can’t run. Come on! There’s the bell!”

Rosalie looked at her with woebegone eyes, so that even unobservant Tom had to take notice. “I say, is anything wrong?”

“Miss Burn says I’m to take extra tennis—not cricket,” Rosalie said mournfully.

“Bet she did! You’re not half bad at tennis, but are an awful mutt at cricket,” Tom replied breezily.

Rosalie could hardly believe her ears. How could anyone treat what was a tragedy to her in so light-hearted a manner?

“Look here!” Tom spoke suddenly. “Why are you being so droopy about it? Your tennis really is tops for any one of us, you know. I heard Gay say so to Jacynth yesterday. You—you aren’t being—well—homesick?” Tom spoke as if there were a deep disgrace in being homesick. Utterly unemotional herself, and trained, in any case, to keep her feelings to herself, she had yet learnt during her term or so at the Chalet School that there *were* girls who didn’t mind letting people know if they were unhappy or upset. She had developed a mild liking for the girl who had been put into her charge ten days before, and hoped that she wasn’t like that.

Unfortunately for both of them, Rosalie was very like that! The tears welled up into her eyes as she answered, “I—I did so want—to be w-with *y-you*, Tom!”

It was a nasty shock for Tom. She had heard her father speak of the “silly fashion of schoolgirl sentimentality”, and had imbibed from him a strong sense of disgust for anything of the kind. She had been thankful to find that most of her kind had as little use for such things as herself. As a whole the Chalet School was remarkably free of such nonsense, though deep, true friendships were often born there and were encouraged—such friendships as lay between Gay Lambert and Jacynth Hardy; or between Daisy Venables and her two great chums,

Gwensi Howell and the Head Girl, Beth Chester. But there was no sentimentality in any of them. Gay and Jacynth never squabbled, Gay being too insouciant and Jacynth too self-contained; but the Triumvirate, as they were called, had had more than one spat, for Gwensi was Welsh with the Celt's quick temper, and Beth's chestnut head was an indication of the same thing. Tom had no experience, therefore, and she just stood staring at Rosalie rather helplessly, while that young lady stood with the tears trickling down her cheeks.

The bell had rung at least five minutes before, but neither took any notice of that. They just stood there, as if rooted in the gravel. At last Tom spoke. Fishing in her blazer pocket, she produced a handkerchief which she held out to Rosalie.

"Here's a nose-mat for you. You'd better mop up," she said.

Rosalie made no attempt to take it. She shut her eyes quickly to stop the hot tears, and then opened them and looked at Tom. Tom was fiddling about among the gravel with her foot—the wrath of Evan Evans, the head gardener, next day when he saw what a mess they had made of his gravel was monumental!—and looking anywhere but at her.

"Wo—won't you—be—f-friends with m-me?" she asked with a quaver.

"Rather thought we were," said Tom, not looking up from the elaborate design she was drawing with the toe of her shoe.

"But—but," Rosalie took a gulp and began again. "I meant—"

What she meant was never told—or not then. Beth Chester, coming round the side of the house just then, saw two Middles standing on the drive where they had no possible business to be at that hour and made straight across the lawn for them to demand wrathfully as she neared them, "What do you two think you're doing here *now*, may I ask?"

Both jumped at the question. They had been so absorbed in their own affairs that they had never seen Beth till she spoke. Rosalie caught her foot in a loop of string that some careless person had cast down, made a wild effort to keep her balance, grabbed at Tom, and fell, dragging the other girl on top of her.

Beth had them both on their feet in less than a minute. Both were scarlet now, and she was in a hurry, in any case, being late for an extra coaching of her own.

"Tom Gay—and the new child," she said, glaring at them. "Well, I haven't any time to waste on you now. You can report yourselves to the Head for being out here when the bell went," she consulted her watch, "*eight and a half minutes ago!*"

The tone of her voice convinced the pair of the enormity of their crime, and Rosalie, still in a tearful condition, wept in good earnest, while Tom, who had glanced up when she began to speak, promptly stared at her own slippers again, and wished herself elsewhere.

"Off you go!" said Beth. "The Head can deal with you this time!"

She set off at a run down the avenue herself, while the pair trailed round to the side entrance the school used and turned down the long corridor at the end of which was the library, used by the Heads as their office and sitting room. Just outside the door, Tom pulled up and grabbed the weeping Rosalie by the arm and shook her slightly.

"For goodness' sake stop howling!" she said earnestly. "It's a kid's game to howl. Do try to be a gentleman!"

Rosalie stared at her, open-mouthed. Then she swallowed fiercely, scrubbed her eyes with the handkerchief Tom once more shoved at her, and said with a choke, "I'm—I'm no more a kid th-than you, T-Tom Gay!"

"Good enough!" Tom replied. "Here goes!" She gave the door her usual hearty bang, and then opened it and entered, followed by Rosalie, who was torn between indignation and terror,

and not very sure which was uppermost. As for Tom herself, she was still recovering from the shock of finding that there was one girl anyhow—or so it seemed—who was prepared to regard her in a way that upset tomboy Tom more than enough.

CHAPTER 4

“I Wish I’d Never Come!”

The library seemed unusually full to Tom as she led the way across the beautiful blue-and-orange Chinese carpet which prevented this north-facing room from looking too cold. Miss Wilson was sitting on one of the broad window-seats and at the desk was seated her co-Head, Miss Annersley, whom Tom herself had seen only twice before. A year ago Miss Annersley, Miss Wilson, Miss Edwards, and Mlle de Lachenais had all been involved in a bad road accident, from which the last three had emerged with serious enough injuries to keep them all in hospital for some weeks—Miss Edwards for a whole term—but Miss Annersley had lain for some days in the gravest danger with head injuries and even when she had recovered sufficiently to leave the hospital, the doctors had insisted that she must not go to school for many a long day. She had arrived the evening before, quite fit, as she had declared when she took Evening Prayers for the Protestant members of the school, and spoken to the Catholics when they came to Hall with Miss Wilson, who was responsible for their religious duties. This was the first time Tom had met her officially. She knew all about “Bill”, as the school affectionately called Miss Wilson, and just how she dealt with sinners. Miss Annersley was an unknown quantity and rather awe-inspiring for that very reason.

Bill regarded the pair coldly, but said nothing. Miss Annersley looked at them with interest. She recognized Tom from her friend’s descriptions. Rosalie was new to both so she could not quite place her.

“Well?” she said with a slight smile. “This is Tom Gay, I think. What do you want, Tom?”

“Please, Beth Chester sent us to you to report ourselves for being on the drive eight and a half minutes after the prep bell rang,” Tom replied, coming to the point with characteristic directness.

Miss Annersley leaned back in her chair and regarded Tom thoughtfully. “Why was that?” she asked. “And, by the way, who are ‘we’?”

“Me and Rosalie Way,” Tom explained. “This is Rosalie.” Then she added, “She’s new this term, and she isn’t exactly used to school yet.”

“So you feel you ought to have pointed out to her that when the prep bell rings you must hurry to your form room?” queried the Head gently.

“Er—yes,” Tom replied with a straight look. She felt that she liked this slender woman with the sunny brown hair threaded with grey, the steady grey-blue eyes which had never yet needed glasses, and the well-cut features.

On her side, Miss Annersley was attracted to the boyish-looking girl who stood so very straight, and gave you look for look. Tom was plain except for her hair, and that she kept cropped as short as possible, but there was an honesty and openness about her that did attract most people.

“Come here, Rosalie,” Miss Annersley said, turning to the other culprit.

Rosalie had stopped crying, but she kept her head down as she came up to the desk, and her chest still heaved occasionally. The Head looked at her, and knew that here she was dealing with the usual schoolgirl—rather more emotional than most of her age, but that was to be expected when she had been a petted only home-bird.

“Did you know about the prep bell?” she asked quietly.

Rosalie nodded. Then, her natural good manners coming to the surface, she mumbled, "Yes, Miss Annersley."

"What were you doing on the drive that you paid no heed to it?" Miss Annersley asked.

No answer! Neither girl felt like telling the exact truth, and to Tom, at any rate, the only alternative was to keep silence. Miss Wilson then decided to take a hand. "Miss Annersley asked you a question, girls," she reminded them crisply.

"We were—talking," Tom said at last, very unwillingly.

"Talking?—or squabbling?" Bill demanded, with an eye to Rosalie's red eyes.

Rosalie herself chipped in here. "I tripped up over some string and banged my head," she said.

Tom gave her an approving look. It was the sort of thing she would have said herself, always supposing she had ever so far forgotten herself as to be caught crying.

"May we know what you were talking about?" Miss Annersley asked with real interest.

"Cricket and tennis," Tom told her promptly.

This was a puzzle. It was likely enough that Tom might be so keen on games chatter that she paid no heed to the bell, but Miss Annersley had hardly expected such a thing in a girl like Rosalie.

"Well," she said at length, "as you two are the first to be sent to me since I've returned, I shall only remind you that bells ring for a purpose here. If you know that purpose, your business is to obey it. If you don't, ask someone who does. Now run along, both of you, and begin your prep, or I'm afraid you won't have time to finish. You ought to have been there twenty-five minutes ago. Don't be late again, please; and don't have to be sent to me, either. Another time you may not get off so easily. Run along now."

Thankful to be out of it so well, Tom headed for the door but was brought up short by a demand from Bill. "Where's your curtsy?"

The Chalet School, having begun in the Tyrol, had adopted some of the ways and customs of that lovely land, among them the habit of curtsying to the Head. When the school came to England, the elder girls kept it up and, from sheer habit, saw to it that the new girls also did it. It came as a shock to a good many new people but in time they grew so used to it that they forgot about it. Tom was an exception to the rule. She had never got beyond a queer duck with her knees, and, as she complained, always felt an idiot when she did *that*. Now she performed her usual jerk, murmuring, "Sorry, Miss Wilson!" Rosalie, accustomed to dancing lessons every winter, executed a pretty bob, and the pair left. They went along the corridors to their form room, where Daisy Venables was taking preparation, and were at once embroiled in an explanation of their lateness.

"Why are you two so late?" Daisy demanded, glancing at her watch. "You ought to have been here half an hour ago. What have you been doing?"

"We were in the library with Miss Annersley," Tom said.

"Why?" Daisy was not going to be fobbed off in that way.

"Beth sent us—for being on the drive after the prep bell had rung," Tom explained.

"Well, will you try to be a little more careful in future?" Daisy spoke in a sarcastic tone of voice. "You're not deaf, either of you? Very well, then. As Miss Annersley has dealt with you, we'll let it go, but don't let me catch you two coming so late to prep again. Go to your seats now, and try to get something done."

They trailed off to their seats, and Daisy returned to the chemistry notes she was copying with little real interest. She was, unfortunately, suffering from a grumbling toothache which

made her take a very dark view of life just now. She knew well enough that she should have reported to Matron, who would have sent her to Armiford to the dentist at once. But Daisy had a dread of the dentist and his weapons which made her keep quiet about her pain. She was trying to overcome it herself with sips of hot water, oil of cloves, of which she had a small bottle, and even, the previous evening, a bread poultice begged by Gwensi Howell from the cook. Plas Howell being Gwensi's home, and only leased to the school, that young lady occasionally felt she might take liberties the others might not, especially as the housekeeper was her own old nurse, Megan; and Cook was Megan's sister. It was all in vain, however, and Daisy was correspondingly on edge.

Preparation proceeded as usual when Tom and Rosalie had slunk to their places, duly subdued for the moment. Tom set to work on her hated French, while Rosalie attended to fifteen lines of poetry set for repetition. Soundless word had already gone round to warn everyone that Daisy Venables was in a bad temper, and they had better be careful.

The first incident took place when Vanna Ozanne, the younger of the twins, and noted for her ability to think of things to do that no one had yet forbidden, pushed her chair back unexpectedly to lean forward to pick up an exercise book that had fallen at the exact moment when Barbara Smith, sitting behind, pushed her desk forward to rescue a dropped pencil. The result was what might have been expected. Chair and desk met with a crash; the inkwell out of the desk bounced up and deposited its contents on the parquet floor; while Vanna lost her balance and sat squarely on top of the mess. Several voices said half-delightedly, half in horror, "Ooh!" and Daisy looked up, her brows drawing together ominously.

"What are you babies doing? Get up—*Vanna!*" as that young person obeyed her, and got to her feet to show a dark patch spreading across the back of her golden-brown velvet frock which was evening wear at the school until it was really warm weather. "Just look at your frock!"

"I can't," Vanna said reasonably. "It's all across the back."

Vanna meant nothing but Daisy was already nervy and she jumped on her junior as sweet-tempered Daisy Venables was rarely known to jump on anyone. "That will do, thank you! Impudence is not required from you. You may lose a conduct mark for your rudeness. And now go and report yourself to Matron. Barbara Smith, go and get a cloth and mop up that mess on the floor. The rest of you, kindly go on with your work unless you want to come back here after supper. Vanna! Did you hear what I said? Go and show that frock to Matron *at once*, and don't let me have to tell you again!"

Vanna fled on the word. Barbara went to ask for the cloths, and Upper Third settled down to its work again. But though Daisy's show of anger kept them in check, there was not the ordinary peaceful atmosphere. An undercurrent of restlessness could be felt, even though there was none of the usual flipping over of pages, clitter-clatter of pens and pencils dropped in the wells of the desks. Indeed, everyone was morbidly anxious not to attract attention to herself, and the result was that no one did much good. As for Daisy herself, with the tooth aching harder than ever, and the feeling that she had made a big fuss over a very little thing, and been most unfair to Vanna, she was ready to fight with a feather. So it was most unlucky that the person who did finally draw the prefect's anger on herself should be Rosalie who had had a sufficiently upsetting time already and was not very far removed from the tearful state in which she had been earlier.

It was such a little thing that began it all, too. Simply that Rosalie, fishing in her pencil-box for a pencil, stuck the nib of her mapping-pen into the fleshy part of her thumb, and cried

out.

Daisy looked up, seeing red as it was. As she jerked her head up, the bad tooth sent a red-hot pain through her gum, and she was hard put to it to choke back an “Ouch!” that would have been the twin of Rosalie’s. Prefects, however, have to consider their dignity. She controlled herself, and emptied the vials of her wrath on Rosalie.

“What are you doing? I suppose it’s impossible to expect infants like you Upper Third to try to work *quietly*; but you may as well understand at once that squawks and squeals may go down very well in a barnyard, but they won’t do *here*! And stand up when I speak to you!”

Rosalie jumped to her feet in such a hurry that she caught the folding desk at which she was sitting with her knee, and overturned it with a resounding crash that finished Daisy. For once, that easy-going person was in a royal rage, and she gave the startled new girl the full benefit of her tongue. By the time she had finished, Rosalie had been reduced to tears once more and the form were meditating revolution if this was the way the prefects meant to treat them this term.

Finally, Rosalie was set to picking up her desk and various possessions and condemned to returning to the schoolroom after supper to write out twenty times in her best handwriting, “I must remember that I am not a baby but a member of Upper Third, and am expected to behave as such, and not to be clumsy and childish in my conduct.”

Like a good many other people who are generally described as sweet-tempered, Rosalie could lose her temper as royally as Daisy had done. This punishment was the finishing touch. Flinging down on the floor the handful of oddments she had picked up, she stamped her foot at the prefect, crying, “How dare you speak to me like that? I hate you—I hate this place! It’s a horrid school! I wish I’d never come!”

She wound up by dashing out of the room, slamming the door after her before any of the startled people in the room could recover enough presence of mind to stop her. A subdued bang a minute later told them that she had rushed out of the side door and into the grounds, and Daisy, now brought to her senses, looking through the window, saw her go tearing along the path that led to the shrubbery. There was only one thing to do, of course, and Daisy did it. Turning to the first girl she saw—Tom Gay, who had watched all this scene with dropping jaw—she sent her to the prefects’ room to ask Gwensi to come and finish prep, while she herself set off to catch Rosalie. Then, without waiting to see if Tom did as she was told or not, Daisy left the room, shot down a back passage which would take her out at the beginning of the shrubbery, and was just in time to see her quarry, still running wildly, disappear among the laurestinus and rhododendrons which flanked the old hornbeam hedge of which Daisy herself knew a secret that had been carefully kept from the girls for more than one reason.

Rosalie was a new girl, and knew little about the grounds. Daisy had been at the school for many years, and knew most of what there was to know. It took her ten minutes or so to find the little nook under some rhododendrons where Rosalie had flung herself down, crying very much like the baby Daisy had called her. Indeed, that young woman felt that she would hardly have been surprised to find her kicking! However, Rosalie did not go so far as that. She shrank back, howling more loudly than ever, when the prefect dropped on her knees beside her and pulled her up; but her feet remained still.

“Look here,” Daisy said, “I’m sorry I lost my temper like that. But you really mustn’t go on squalling like a teething babe! Here’s my hanky; now mop up. And another time, just try to be a little quieter in prep. Other people want to work, you know, even if you don’t.” By this time she had got Rosalie to her feet and was leading her back to the house. Rosalie had

stopped sobbing from sheer terror, and Daisy, after a look at her flushed, tear-stained face, had the sense to take her to Matron who packed her off to bed, bidding the prefect wait in her room till she could speak to her.

With Matron seeing to things, Rosalie found herself bathed and in bed in less than twenty minutes. Then Matron, having given her a glass of milk and some bread and butter, went to tackle Daisy, who was so ashamed of herself by this time that she gave Matron a full account of the whole thing, including the toothache.

Matron nodded. "You and Jo!" she said scornfully when Daisy had come to an end. "I don't know if she's infected you, but you're as like her as you can ever be over the dentist. Show me the tooth."

As meekly as if she were a Junior, and not an important person due to go to Oxford in October, Daisy opened her mouth and let Matron examine it. That small lady saw all that was to be seen, and then nodded.

"I'll ring up for an appointment tomorrow. That's a bad tooth, and must be seen to at once. There's another that needs attention, too. Very well, Daisy. And now you can just take yourself off to bed, too. I'm coming in twenty minutes' time with some mouthwash, and when you've rinsed your mouth thoroughly you can have your supper and an aspirin, and then, I hope, you'll sleep. No argument! Go and do as I bid you!"

Seeing no help for it, Daisy went.

CHAPTER 5

Rosalie Creates a Sensation

Needless to state, Upper Third was all agog over Rosalie Way's amazing outburst during prep. It was a bitter disappointment to those of them who slept in "North Yellow" that Matey caught them in the corridor and forbade them to disturb Rosalie Way when they went up to bed that night. However, no one ventured to disobey Matey, who ruled them all with a rod of iron. So, for that night at least, Rosalie was left in peace so far as questions were concerned. But no one could stop them from making remarks about the affair, short of forbidding all talking, so she heard plenty about it while Anne Webster and Co. disrobed and brushed their hair.

"Do you think she's crackers?" Anne asked as she pummelled her brown head with a hard brush. "I mean, look at the way she flared out!"

"Just rage, I think," Nora Bird replied, sitting down on the floor to pull off her stockings. "You wouldn't think it, would you? She looks too sweet and soft to bust up like that."

"Well, she did it," Amy West reminded them in her gentle little voice. "Daisy was being horribly sharp, you know."

"Yes, I know. Not like her, is it? I wonder what's wrong?" mused Anne.

"Matey will ask what's wrong if you dither like that," someone else said. "P'r'aps Daisy's upset about something at home. Mrs Maynard hasn't been up very often this term."

"More she has! That's queer, when you think of it," Nora said as she wriggled into her pyjamas. "She's never had her new girls' party, either."

"Probably the Trips and Stephen have something infectious," suggested Amy, while Rosalie pricked up her ears. She had heard the others talking about "Mrs Maynard"—"Joey Maynard", and had wondered who this person of whom they all seemed so fond could be. And what on earth were "Trips"? She made up her mind to find that out first thing next morning. In the meantime, she thought the girls were horrid to talk like that about her. Oh, dear! This was a horrid place!

Like most placid people, Rosalie, once roused, found it hard to calm down again. When Tom had treated her in that offhand manner on the drive she had started something that was going to give two or three people at the school a bad headache before it was all cleared up. Not that Rosalie could have explained it herself. Once the dormitory had settled down for the night, she felt herself growing drowsy too, despite the nap she had had before any of them came upstairs. The next thing she knew, the sunlight was streaming in through the open windows, and the new day had come.

Rosalie sat up in bed, and looked through the half-open curtains. The well-polished parquet of the floor gleamed with a golden-brown sheen. Outside, the blackbirds and thrushes were telling the world what a glorious day it was going to be. She burrowed under her pillow for her watch, and found that it was barely six o'clock. Why shouldn't she get up now instead of waiting for the bell? She had had all that time of extra bed last night. It would be lovely out in the garden.

Rosalie was still too new to school to realize that she had no right to do such a thing without leave. She slipped out of bed, washed and dressed; stripped her bed, and then,

carrying her shoes in case she should wake the others, left the dormitory and ran down the corridor, feeling much better already.

On the stairs she met one of the housemaids, who gave her a cheery “Good morning, miss!” and went on with her work. In the hall there was another, sweeping the floor while she hummed the old Welsh song “Mentra Gwen” softly to herself. Nansi Evans opened her eyes when she saw the Middle, but she was behindhand with her work, so she only smiled at her, and Rosalie hurried out of the big front door, thus unwittingly breaking another rule.

Now, as luck would have it, Tom Gay, always an early riser, had also wakened long before the rising-bell. Being well trained in the rules of the school, she had pulled on her dressing-gown and bedroom slippers, and gone to see if she could find someone to give her permission to put in an hour’s gardening at the form garden before breakfast. She had met Miss Wilson, who was generally afoot by six, received a gracious permission, and scuttered back on light feet to dress as quickly and quietly as she could. Thus she had been to the kitchen to ask Cook for a glass of milk—to which that worthy had added a slice of bread-and-butter—and was now busy at weeding just at the moment when Rosalie ran along the terrace before the great house, the fresh May breeze tossing the long ringlets about her shoulders.

Rosalie turned the corner of the house, and decided to go along past the school gardens, and a little way into the nearby spinney. Tom saw her coming, jumped to the conclusion that she had come to garden as well, and stood up, fork in hand, to welcome her.

“Hello, Rosalie! Isn’t this a wizard morning? Coming to weed a bit?” she said genially.

Rosalie stopped dead in her tracks. Her blue eyes grew cold as she looked at Tom, and she said in as chilly a voice as she could, “No, I haven’t. I’m going for a walk.”

“*By yourself?*” Tom stared.

“Of course by myself. Why not?” Rosalie demanded.

“Because it isn’t allowed,” Tom returned bluntly. “Even in the grounds if we want to go for a walk we’ve got to go in pairs. It’s in the rules. Didn’t you know that?”

“No, and I don’t care if it is, either!” flashed Rosalie.

“Haven’t you *asked?*” Tom wanted to know.

“Asked? Of course I haven’t!”

“Then there’ll be a row. Haven’t you had your milk either?”

“No, and I don’t want any! I don’t want anything! You leave me alone!”

Tom dropped her fork. Coming closer, she laid a grubby hand on the sleeve of Rosalie’s clean blouse, saying earnestly, “I say, you can’t go off like that. Honestly, Rosalie, it isn’t allowed, and the rules are awfully strict about it. Do come back and find Bill and ask her. Then we can get your milk from Cook, and if you really want to go for a walk, I’ll go with you—I’ve done quite a decent bit of weeding,” she added, with a complacent look at the patch she had cleared.

But Rosalie was not prepared to forget last night’s proceedings as easily as that. She took off Tom’s hand, saying, “Your hands are *filthy* and this is a clean blouse. And just *look* at your tunic!” she added.

Tom glanced down at her tunic. “It’s only soil; it’ll brush off. Anyway, it won’t show all that much. ’Tisn’t as if it was blue or green. I always thank goodness our colours are brown and flame. Brown doesn’t show dust and soil like other colours—not *our* brown, anyhow! Look here, Rosalie, I’m sorry I upset you last night. I’m not much on being special pals with anyone, and I haven’t much time, anyway. But if you really want us to—to be a bit matey,

well I don't mind." Which was doing the thing handsomely, considering it was Tom Gay making the offer.

Now was the time for Rosalie to meet Tom halfway. Instead, the silly child drew back, tossed her ringlets, and said, "I've changed my mind."

"Oh, *have* you?" Tom retorted wrathfully. She had made a big effort for her, and this was the way it was received! Very well, Rosalie Way could stew in her own juice after this. She turned back to the bed, picked up her fork, and began to weed again, merely remarking, "Well, when you've got your row, don't say I didn't warn you!"

Rosalie stared at her bent back in silence for a moment. Then she turned away and made off to the spinney, saying to herself, "I don't care!"

Tom finished her patch of weeding, gathered up her tools and the little heap of weeds lying on the path, and departed for the house to make herself fit to be seen for breakfast.

"I can't think how you *can*!" Vanna Ozanne said plaintively when they met in the dormitory. "It's bad enough having to be up so early, anyhow."

"Glad I'm not a slackster like some folk!" replied Tom. "The garden would come off badly if *some* of us didn't do a spot of work early on."

"Tom Gay! Just look at your tunic!" said the horrified voice of Daisy Venables as she came round to see that all was as it should be before the girls went downstairs. "What have you been doing to it?"

"I've been weeding," Tom explained.

"Where's your gardening overall?"

"I'm afraid I forgot it," Tom confessed.

Daisy, who was not looking forward to the morning before her, frowned and said sharply, "Then you ought to remember. You can write out five times in your best handwriting, 'I may not garden unless I am wearing my overall,' and let me have it before you go to bed."

"Yes, Daisy," Tom replied meekly; but when that damsel had left the dormitory she turned to Bride and asked with some indignation, "What's wrong with Daisy? She nearly ate that silly little ass Rosalie Way last night, and now she's slain *me*! She must be ill or something!"

"She's going to the dentist with Matey this morning," Bride said.

"O-oh! Right! It's rotten for her all right."

Tom, who never held a grudge, went down to breakfast, keeping well behind tall Beth Chester as she passed Matey. Luckily, that lady was busy and preoccupied, and never noticed the state of the tunic, and after breakfast the other members of the dormitory set to work with clothes brushes and plenty of goodwill, and brushed Tom down till the dried soil had been disposed of and Tom herself complained that she felt like an overgroomed pony!

"Well, you couldn't go into school looking like that!" Bride told her. "Someone would have seen, and you'd have got into a frantic row."

"And you might be decently grateful," added Vanna's twin, Nella. "My arm aches, I brushed so hard at you."

"Oh, well, thanks for the buggy-ride," Tom replied with a grin at Nella's uncomprehending stare. "I'm sure it's smashing of all of you."

"And don't use that expression," Primrose Day put in. "If any of the staff heard you they would talk all right. And if it was the *pres*—!" Primrose stopped short, implying that to fall into the hands of the prefects was ten times worse than to fall into the hands of the mistresses; and so, from their point of view, it was.

Tom finished making her bed and tidying her cubicle, a job she did with neatness and dispatch. Her father had taught her to be immaculately tidy in most things, and her tiny domain was usually the pink of neatness. When she had done, she joined with the others, and they trooped off downstairs—Bride and two or three others to practise; some of them to go to Miss Burn for “remedials”; and the rest to do half an hour’s preparation before they were summoned for the morning walk.

Rosalie was in the form room when they reached it. She was sitting at her desk, industriously learning her repetition, and took no notice of anyone. There was no chance to speak to her, for just on their heels came pretty Miss Linton, the junior English mistress, and though she was very jolly out of school she was a firm disciplinarian in, and no one wanted to lose a conduct mark. Furthermore, the escort for their walk this morning was Mlle Berné, the junior French mistress, and they must talk in French. This was a good deal of a handicap to them, and, except for remarks such as “Regardez les fleurs, comme elles sont jolies!” or “Ce jour, il fait beau temps!” no one had very much to say. So Tom missed a piece of information that would have interested her deeply, and might have stirred her to action if she had had it. Unluckily, Elfie Woodward, who knew it, was not her partner for the walk, in addition to which, while Tom’s Latin was excellent, her French was considerably below the standard of the rest, and she probably would have understood only a third of what Elfie might have said; and finally, as soon as they crossed the threshold of the school on their return, Elfie was seized on by Miss Burn, and marched off to the remedial room to explain—if she could!—why she had not come for the daily massage she was supposed to have for the ankle that was still weak after a very bad sprain sustained the term before. As Elfie had been with Matron, being told exactly what that worthy thought of her for breaking the electric light bulb in the bathroom the night before when she had dropped her sponge out of the window into the ivy and fished for it with one of the long window poles—no reasonable explanation for the sponge business—she felt no desire to give the angry Miss Burn a full account, and went, looking as someone remarked, like a scared kitten.

When she reached the form room just in time for roll-call she was so full of her own grievances that she forgot the bit of news she had meant to impart to Tom. The result was that halfway through the morning Rosalie Way created a terrific sensation by suddenly fainting in the middle of French; and by the time they had brought her round, carried her up to her dormitory, where Nurse from the San came to see to her. Matron being absent, and settled down again, at least one-third of the lesson had been wasted, as Tom learned when she rejoined the form, having been for a Latin lesson with Upper Fourth. French she took with Upper Second at present, and, as Mlle complained, it began to look as if she meant to stay with them.

“Serve her right, silly little mook!” she said when she heard what had happened. “She’s just *asked* for that, if you ask me!”

“Oh, then, did *you* see how she played round with her brekker?” Elfie asked eagerly. “I meant to ask her if she wasn’t feeling well, but it’s always such a rush, and then I forgot.”

“Played round with her brekker?” repeated Tom. “No, I didn’t know that. But the little idiot was out early and didn’t ask leave, and didn’t get her milk, either. If she’s been messing about like that, it’s no wonder she’s made a show of herself. She’s just the sort to do it.”

“*You* kicked up a fuss about having to go for milk if you wanted to go out and garden before brekker,” Bride mentioned.

“I’m not Rosalie. I don’t faint. But she looks just the sort of kid who would,” retorted Tom. “Matey’ll have something to say when she comes back and hears about it!”

“P’r’aps Rosalie won’t tell her about being out early,” Barbara Smith suggested dubiously. “Jolly unstraight of her if she doesn’t!”

Then Miss Burnett came for history, and they had to settle down to the events of Henry VII’s reign for the time being.

As it later proved, Rosalie said nothing at all about that breach of the rules, and Matron, rather anxious, for the child looked wan and there were shadows under her eyes, kept her in bed for a couple of days. By that time the school was all agog because plans for the half term had been announced, so beyond a few kind inquiries as to how she felt, no one said much to her about it, and Rosalie, accustomed to a good deal of petting when she was poorly, mentally added another bad mark to the fairly heavy list she had already made out against the school, and wished harder than ever that she had never come.

CHAPTER 6

Half Term

At the Chalet School it was the custom for most of the girls to stay at school for half term in the short term. Only those who lived near went home, the rest enjoying expeditions, tournaments, or dancing and games in Hall—it all depended on whether it was the Easter or the summer term. Easter falling late this year, the summer term was the short one—only eleven weeks long. Half term was at the beginning of June, and would not begin until the Friday afternoon.

“You will play tennis and cricket if it’s fine,” Miss Annersley told the school. “On Saturday we’ll have a picnic to Tintern Abbey, and on the Monday we are going to Stratford to the evening show of *As You Like It*, starting off at half past eight in the morning and not returning till—well, very late. I’m afraid you must rest all the next day.”

Sighs of delight went round the great room which had once been the double drawing room. The picnic to Tintern would be jolly good fun, and as for the visit to the theatre, that was a joyous affair for everyone.

“Do we go by coach or train, Miss Annersley?” Beth asked.

“By coach. We’d never get there in time if we tried to do it by train. It’s a tiresome, cross-country journey by rail. But by coach we can manage it easily. Now, I’ve booked seats provisionally but I must let the manager know exactly how many we shall need so I want you all to write home at once—those of you who might be going home—and find out what your parents want you to do.—Yes, Beth?”

“Lots of us are on the phone. May we ring up, please?”

“That would be a good idea. Give your phone number to Miss Dene in the office and she will attend to it at once. Any of you who are *not* on the phone may go straight to your form rooms and write a postcard, asking your people to let you know at once. Miss Burnett is going into Armiford, so she will take them with her and post them there. That is all, I think. Stand!”

The school stood to attention. Miss Cochrane at the piano struck up a lively march, and they marched out to their form rooms, where those who must write home were supplied with postcards for the purpose by their form mistresses, while a queue lined up outside the door of Miss Dene’s office.

In the event, there were only some sixty or seventy girls whose people were hard-hearted enough to insist that they go home. The rest had leave to stay and share the joys of half term. Of course, it was understood that the twenty-three Kindergarten boarders would have their own treats.

“And a good job, too!” as Beth said when discussing it with the rest of the prefects. “We shall have quite enough to do with looking after the Junior Middles without having to run after babies of under ten.”

“They wouldn’t enjoy Stratford, anyhow,” agreed Daisy. “You can’t expect kids of that age to appreciate Shakespeare.”

Gay Lambert chuckled. “Dorks will like it all right, won’t you, Dorks, old thing? You’ll see how the nobs really do it.”

Dorcas Brownlow, a slender, quiet-looking girl who, surprisingly, was the younger sister of the famous film star, Eunice Brownlow, nodded.

“I’m not likely to follow Eunice,” she said, “but I’m going to have a shot at the legitimate as soon as I leave school. I’ve got a yen for character parts. I’m sure I could play a stupid servant or a cranky old woman and get away with it. Anyhow, it’s the one thing I want to do, so I’m out for all plays I can see. ‘Audrey’ is the woman’s character part, isn’t she? I’ll keep an eye on her.”

“‘Phebe’ might be called one in a way, too,” Beth said.

“Oh, *no!*” Gwensi Howell was quite decided about this. “She’s only a character because of the way ‘Rosalind’ treats her.—Oh, drat! There’s the bell! Clear out, you Junior prees!”

In the lower forms excitement was even more pronounced, though Tom Gay did say she thought it a waste of a day to go sitting in a stuffy theatre! However, half a dozen people fell on her at once to prove to her that she didn’t know what she was talking about, and Miss Linton came to take literature with Upper Third, and found a gang of folk all jabbering at top speed, while only two or three were sitting properly at their desks as they all should have been. She called them to order at once, but being an understanding person, she only advised them to be more careful another time; and when Bride Bettany begged for a lesson on *As You Like It* she agreed, and shelved the one she had prepared on the life of Robert Louis Stevenson.

From then until the happy day when half term was to begin, the girls talked of little else in their spare time. Even Rosalie was drawn into the general interest and brightened up, much to the relief of her elders who had been anxious about her. The silly feud between her and Tom was ended, for the time being at any rate, and she joined in the talk of the form quite happily.

Friday came at long last, and it was well that the Chalet School staff were a patient and understanding set on the whole, or they would never have survived the morning’s lessons. The girls were all far too much worked up to worry much about such things as English, French, Latin, or maths. Finally, after Break, they found themselves divided into four groups, each with a couple of mistresses attached, and set to read aloud various scenes from *As You Like It* as they sat under the trees that bordered the great lawn. School ended at twelve to enable people to catch the buses and trains that left Armiford round about one o’clock, the school buses taking them there. The rest of the school went upstairs to discard gym tunics and get into summer gingham frocks before the picnic lunch which they were to have in the orchard. After that, they ‘picked up’ four cricket elevens, and the rest either played tennis or—in the case of the Juniors—were sent to the front lawn for rounders.

It was a jolly afternoon and evening, especially as the staff had combined to produce small prizes for the winners; and after supper they wound up with country dancing on the lawn, all going to bed quite happily, and looking forward to next day’s trip to Tintern.

Once their charges were safely tucked away—with the exception of the prefects, who were sitting on the terrace with books and needlework for their valued extra hour—the staff forgathered in the rose garden, where Frau Mieders, the domestic science mistress, served lemonade and strawberries and cream. They lay in deck chairs, or perched on the stone balustrading that ran round the garden, and chattered idly about various subjects. Only Miss Wilson, rocking in one corner of the swing hammock while Miss Annersley occupied the other, said little.

“You’re awfully silent. Bill,” Mary Burnett, an old girl of the school, suddenly chaffed her. “Why this sudden quietness?”

Miss Wilson, who had been studying the sky meditatively, looked at her. “Have you looked at the sky at all, you people?” she asked.

“Looked at the sky? What are you talking about?” demanded Miss Slater, the senior maths mistress, while everyone glanced hurriedly upwards.

“Only that I don’t think we shall manage our picnic tomorrow. That’s a very wet sunset! And look at the hills! They might be cut out of cardboard!”

“Oh, my goodness!” Miss Linton exclaimed in distress. “What on earth do we do with the school at that rate?”

“I’ve no idea. We’d better make up our minds, though, so as to be ready for them. If we get one of those pouring wet June days, Tintern is definitely off!” Miss Wilson spoke with finality.

“But what can we do with them?” Miss Slater asked in dismay. “What a pity we didn’t arrange for the Stratford trip tomorrow instead of Monday! Not that we could guess about the weather,” she added.

“As far back as when I first rang up about seats? No, we certainly could not,” Miss Annersley agreed. “That was at the beginning of term, so we could scarcely foresee the weather five weeks or so ahead.”

“Well, we’d better have something ready for them. What shall it be?” Miss Burn demanded.

“All of you think,” Miss Wilson ordered. “I’ll give you two minutes by my watch to evolve something from—*now!*”

The staff sat and frowned, screwed up their faces, or shut their eyes, as helped each of them best. When Bill called “Time!” most of them were still blank; but two or three people had suggestions to offer.

“Mark the gym and have a badminton tournament,” was Hilary Burns’s idea.

“Not enough shuttlecocks; and the new ones haven’t come yet, though I ordered them three weeks ago,” pretty Miss Dene, like Mary Burnett, Hilary Burn and Gillian Linton, an old girl, and now, and for a good many years, Head’s secretary, crushed this plan at once.

“Yes; it *would* happen like that, wouldn’t it?” Hilary agreed.

“Let them give us an impromptu concert,” Grizel Cochrane, still another of the old guard, proposed. “It would keep them busy all the morning and afternoon preparing for it, and they could give it at night.”

Miss Annersley sat up. “No. I’ve a better idea still,” she said with decision. She turned to Mlle de Lachenais. “Jeanne, do you remember the half term in the Tyrol—the one we had the term Mademoiselle was first taken ill?”

Mlle de Lachenais nodded. “Yes, indeed! I stayed down at the school to be with her, but when she did not need me I joined in the fun.”

“Well, do you remember we gave them a sheets and pillow case party?”

“Of course I do! But, Hilda, do *you* remember that Jo dressed Robin as an angel, and used silver enamel for the halo, and Robin’s hair stuck to it? It was supposed to be quick-drying, but it wasn’t as quick as all that; and then the room was hot.”

Miss Annersley nodded. “Never shall I forget Jo’s face when she burst in on us and demanded that Matron should come and see what *she* could do!” she said reminiscently. “That was Matron Gould, who had charge of Le Petit Chalet,” she added for the benefit of those of the staff who had not been at the school when it was in the Tyrol.

“Do you mean we’re to give them a sheets and pillow case party tomorrow?” Hilary asked. “Won’t it be rather warm attire at this time of year?”

“So warm that I wasn’t even considering it. But if it really is wet tomorrow, then at breakfast time I shall announce a fancy-dress party for the evening, everyone to make her own dress, and we’ll give prizes for the best—the funniest—the most ingenious—and the most in character. That’ll be eight prizes—four for the Seniors and four for the Juniors. Matey, do you think Megan could rise to the occasion with an extra special supper? Good! Then we’ll have a meeting among ourselves at ten tomorrow to discuss a programme. Of course, if it’s fine this will be off. And now, as it’s past ten o’clock, I propose we call it a day and go to bed. Whatever happens, we shall have a strenuous time tomorrow.”

The others agreed with her, so they cleared away their glasses and plates, and departed bedwards. Miss Wilson remarking to such of them as were near enough as they went in at the main door, “It will rain all right! Don’t any of you worry about that!”

Sure enough, the school wakened next morning to a moaning wind which shook the leafy trees, and the sound of heavy rain beating on the casements. In a good many cases there were pools on the floors, and dormitory prefects went flying for cloths and buckets to wipe up. The rest bemoaned themselves loudly, for Tintern was quite definitely *off*. No one would dream of allowing any picnic in weather of that kind.

“Isn’t it like our luck!” wailed Vanna Ozanne.

“I do think it might have kept fine over the weekend,” her twin contributed. “It could rain pink snow and green ink after that!”

“Dear me, Nella, how lurid that sounds!” Miss Linton’s voice sounded mildly from the doorway. “I came to tell you people to put on your gingham and blazers. And don’t look so miserable, either. If you can’t do one thing, you can do another, and a jolly decent show, too.”

With wild thuds and thumps they flung themselves out of bed, and rushed to surround her.

“Oh, Miss Linton, what is it?—What are we going to do?—Is it something really as super as Tintern?”

“Hi—no slang! I know it’s half term, but you might spare my feelings,” the pretty mistress protested, struggling from the throng of pyjamaed people who had hurtled on her. “Get dressed, all of you, and don’t forget to strip your beds. Matey will be as strict today as any other.” Then she made her escape, sweetly ignorant of her informal mention of Matron. Even mistresses at half term forget on occasion, especially when they are old girls of the school themselves!

Gillian Linton ran downstairs to the staff room, where she found Hilary Burn and Mary Burnett already awaiting her to demand suggestions for the evening’s programme. Before she could reply, there came a loud, peremptory ringing on the telephone, and Rosalie Dene, who had followed Gillian into the room, exclaimed. “Oh, drat it!” and went to answer.

“Who on earth can that be, so early in the morning?” demanded Mary Burnett.

“It’s not so fearfully early—nearly half past eight,” Hilary retorted with a glance at her watch. “Now, Gill, what ideas have you?”

“Blob!” she was informed. “I can’t think of a single original thing.”

“Then we shall have to resurrect some old ones, for I’m without ideas this time, too. Now let’s think!”

Miss Dene came in just then to announce, “Jack Maynard. He wanted the Heads—either or both. He wouldn’t say any more, though.”

“Bother him!” Hilary said fervently. “He might know how anxious we all are to know. I suppose,” she added, “that’s why he wants Bill and/or the Abbess?”

“He didn’t say, but I don’t see what else it could be,” Rosalie agreed.

“Certainly not at this hour of the day. Daisy and Co. went to the Round House for half term, didn’t they?” asked Mary Burnett.

“They did. And the Triplets are there, too.”

“I wish someone would come and tell us!” Hilary had got up and was wandering restlessly about the room.

“Someone will in a moment. Anyhow, behaving like a caged tiger isn’t going to bring them any sooner,” Mary told her tartly. “You come and sit down, and turn your great mind on to tonight’s programme.”

Hilary did as she was asked, and her virtue gained its reward, for the door opened again, to admit Miss Wilson.

“What was it, Bill?” Gillian asked. “Jo’s all right, isn’t she?”

“Quite all right now, though they’ve had a tough time of it for once. She has a second son, born at seven o’clock this morning. Jack Maynard told me to tell you folk that Jo said she was glad he’d escaped being a May kitten,” she added with a sudden grin.

“How like Jo! You’re sure she’s all right?” Hilary added anxiously.

“Jack says she’s very weak, but it’s only a question of time now.”

“And the baby?—What’s he to be called, by the way?”

“He’s all right, too. Not such a fine child as Stephen was, but quite healthy. His name is to be Charles Richard—no jokes about *Green* this time!” the Head added with a sudden dancing light in her eyes.

The others laughed at this memory. Jo Maynard’s first son, born the morning after his mother had dyed herself green by upsetting a bowlful of dye over her own head, had, for the first ten days or so of his existence, been named Stephen Green, so that everyone had thought this was really to be his name, since Jo had bound her household to secrecy about her mishap, and the story had leaked out only gradually.

“Richard is after her brother and father, of course,” said Mary. “Where does the ‘Charles’ come in?”

“Jo says it’s her favourite boy’s name. Well, what about a little breakfast, you people? There goes the gong for the school, so I expect ours will be ready, too. Come along to the library.” And Miss Wilson set the example by leading the way, her hand through Mary Burnett’s arm.

After breakfast, of which the prefects were in sole charge, and bed-making, they had Prayers, at which Miss Annersley announced the news.

“Why does everyone make such a fuss about Mrs Maynard?” Rosalie Way asked Bride Bettany when they finally streamed away to amuse themselves till half past ten, after which they were to hear an announcement of plans for the rest of the day. “I know she’s Josephine Bettany and writes all those lovely stories. But why do you all make such a row about her?”

Before Bride could answer, Elfie Woodward rushed in. “Mrs Maynard’s a part of the school, of course!” she said crisply. “It doesn’t matter how much married she is, or now many babies she has—this new one makes five with the Trips—”

“Yes, but what *are* the Trips?” Rosalie asked bewilderedly.

They stopped short and stared at her.

“Mean to say no one’s told you *yet*—and we’ve been at school all these weeks?” demanded Primrose Day.

Bride hushed them all. “You shut up! *I’m* telling this—it’s *my* aunt and *my* cousins, anyhow. Mrs Maynard is my Auntie Jo, Rosalie, and her first babies were three girls—triplets

—Len, Con, and Margot they're called. Then Stephen came last year, and now there's Charles. We were awfully bucked when the Triplets came! They're the only ones in the family. Auntie Jo hasn't shown up very much this term so far but as soon as she can I expect she'll come and then you'll see her."

This was as much as anyone could tell Rosalie, even Tom saying, "I think Mrs Maynard's a gentleman—more of a gentleman than most!" which was terrific praise from Tom Gay, but not very helpful to anyone who had never met the lady!

Then they went on to their common room, where they were expected to amuse themselves quietly till half past ten.

Right on the stroke of the hour the big bell rang, and they all streamed into Hall, where Miss Annersley blandly announced that they were to have a fancy-dress party that night, with prizes for the dresses which they were to manufacture for themselves from whatever they had. Nothing would be lent from the acting cupboards. Then she dismissed them with the comfortable assurance that they would be fully occupied till tea time at any rate, and went to ask Gillian Linton to run her down to Plas Gwyn in the little car Hilary shared with two other members of the staff, in the hopes of a peep at Joey Maynard and her new son.

CHAPTER 7

Fancy-Dress Party

Left to themselves, the girls stared at each other. How on earth were they to evolve fancy dress with just their everyday clothes?

“Do you suppose we can use our bed clothes?” Primrose Day asked at length of Mollie Avery, one of the prefects who had not gone away.

“Just you let Matey catch you at it!” Molly replied amiably.

“Then what are we to do?”

“Use your brains—if you’ve got any. Gay and Jacynth, I vote we go to our rooms and have a look round. You kids do the same; but take my advice, and leave the bedclothes and window curtains and things like that alone. Come on, you two!” Mollie caught the pair by the arms and moved off with them, and the Middles were left to think out what they could concoct with the materials they had at hand.

By degrees they melted away in groups of threes and fours. Finally, only Tom, Bride, who had begged to stay though her sister Peggy had gone to their aunt at the Round House, Primrose, and the Ozanne twins were left. Rosalie had vanished with Amy West from her own dormitory.

“Well,” said Tom at last, “I haven’t a notion what to do. Here, Bride, you’ve got the brains of this crowd! Think up something for us.”

“I like your cheek!” Bride complained. “I don’t know what to think up for myself.” She stared disconsolately round the room. “Oh, well, I s’pose we’d better go to the dormy and see what we can find.”

They ran upstairs, and presently were standing in their cubicles, turning out their drawers with due care for what Matron would say if she found them untidy later on. Suddenly Bride gave a squeal of delight.

“Here’s that old cotton dressing gown of mine that Mummy sent from India for Peggy two years ago. It’s short for her now, so she gave it to me.” She spread out a gorgeous affair in printed cotton. “Look! I could do something with *that*, I should think.”

“You certainly ought to,” Vanna agreed, “but what?”

The problem was solved by Tom, of all persons. “Get something to make a turban, and go as an Indian thingamajig,” she suggested.

“A Rajah, do you mean? Tom, what a super idea! Oh, but I ought to have baggy trousers, too. What about *them*?”

“Take the laccy out of the top of those pink knickers and sew them on to something so that they come to your ankles,” suggested Primrose.

“Good scheme! I’ve got a scarf that’ll do for the turban, so that’s *me* fixed! What about you others, though?”

But once brains had begun to work, they continued. “My blue party frock has a deep hem. I’ll take it out. Then I’ll sew it up in front, and wear it over the slip I have for that awful Kate Greenaway thing,” Nella said. “And I’ll make a cap out of two of my lace collars and a hanky. Then I can be Miss Muffet. Primrose, will you lend me that red-and-yellow spider pincushion of yours?”

“OK. Here you are,” Primrose said amiably. “And now think up something for me, please.”

Nella looked dismayed. “I can’t think of a thing—Oh, I know! You can be a primrose. There’s lots of green and yellow crinkled paper in our cupboard from the Sale last term.”

Primrose looked disgusted. “It’s bad enough having a mad name like mine without going round *as* it,” she said crossly. “Can’t you think of something better than that?”

“Let’s go as the Bathing Twins, you and me,” proposed Vanna.

“How would we do that?”

“Why, wear our dressing gowns—Or no! Our swimming costumes and caps. Then we’d safety-pin towels round us, and tie on our sponges and loofahs. We might even be able to fix our soap on somehow.”

“Yawp!” shouted Tom suddenly. “Got an idea!” And before any of them could speak, she had hared out of the room, and they heard her go scudding along the corridor.

“Wonder what it is?” Bride said when they had recovered from their surprise. “Oh, well, we’ll know soon enough. Well, that’s you three and me fixed up. By the way, where’s Elfie?”

“Miss Burn grabbed her for massage,” Vanna said. “She’ll be here presently.”

“Poor old Elf! That ankle is being a nuisance, isn’t it? Can’t we think up something for her and save her the trouble?” Bride suggested.

However, when Elfie, released from Miss Burn’s ministrations a few minutes later, arrived in the dormitory, she was not in the least grateful for the suggestion of a fairy, made with their crinkled paper, which was the best they could do.

“Of course I’m not going to be anything so mad!” she told them. “I’m going as Sport.”

“How’re you going to manage that?” Bride asked doubtfully.

“I’m wearing my gymfrock, and carrying Miss Burn’s golf bag over my shoulder—I asked her to lend it to me and she said yes at once. Then I’m having the old shuttlecocks that are losing their feathers to make a kind of crown, and I’m having my tennis racquet slung across my back, and a bag of tennis balls tied round my waist, and a lacrosse and a hockey stick to carry under my other arm—”

“You won’t be able to dance with all that,” giggled Primrose.

“Oh, I’ll put down the golf bag and lacrosse and stick then, of course. And Miss Burnett is going to sew some fishing flies across the front of my gymfrock—with the hooks turned in so nobody gets caught.”

“Well, it’s a wizard idea,” they told her cordially.

“Where’s Tom? What’s she going as?” Elfie demanded after she had accepted this stately praise with a most immodest “Yes, isn’t it?”

“Goodness knows! We were all talking when she gave a sudden squawk and beetled off down the corridor. She hasn’t come back yet,” Vanna said placidly. “She’ll tell us when she comes back, though. Well, we’d better get cracking, Prim. How ever we are going to make *soap* stick on anywhere, I don’t know.”

“What are you all going as?” Elfie demanded.

They told her, and she was pleased to approve of all but Nella’s.

“That’s a soppy sort of thing,” she said. “Oh, well it’s your show!” For the Ozanne twins were bristling up, and Nella’s banner of waist-long golden hair was tossing, a certain danger signal.

After this, they parted, to pull their cubicle curtains together and make their costumes, which occupied them for the rest of the morning.

Meanwhile, Tom had gone tearing off to “North Yellow”, where she found Amy West and Rosalie Way both devoid of any ideas and with their two beds strewn with the contents of their drawers. When she entered, Rosalie’s face cleared.

“Tom! Oh, good! Look here, can you give us any idea what to go as?”

“I can’t think of a thing!” wailed Amy West, a small, round-faced person of twelve. “What *can* you do with just things like those?” She waved her hand towards her laden bed.

Tom looked at them, and then at her. “It’s a sticky problem, isn’t it?” She looked at Amy’s round, rosy face again, and then began to chuckle. “I know! You go as a *Granny!*”

“A *Granny?*” Amy was puzzled, and so was Rosalie.

“Yes—like one in an aged book. You know—cap and mittens, and a shawl and long skirt.”

“But how can I? I haven’t *got* a long skirt, and I’ve nothing to make one. I haven’t any mittens, either.”

Tom came up to the bed and began to lift the things on it. “If I were you I’d shove some of these back. You won’t want them, and Matey’d take a running jump backwards if she saw this mess. You can’t use vests and things, anyhow. Shove them back, Amy. And your stockings and gloves, and all your undies; they can go too. You help her, Rosalie.”

The pair replaced Amy’s underwear in the drawer from which it came, and Tom was left with her frocks, blouses, handkerchiefs, and one or two other oddments. She frowned as she looked at them. Dressing-up was not much in her line, but Amy looked so helpless, she simply *must* do something about it! Then her face suddenly cleared.

“I know! Your dressing gown—your winter one, I mean. It’s here, isn’t it?”

“Yes, I always leave it. I’ve another at home.”

“Well, let’s have a dekkko at it.”

Amy produced it—a dark red affair in ripple cloth, buttoning up to the throat with neat turn-down collar. Tom pounced on it.

“That’s the ticket! Oh, this’ll be a piece of cake! Look here, scoot off to Matey and ask her for some newspapers. We’ll have to pad the skirt out, you see. Then there’s that white woolly bedjacket of yours? We can fold it—like this—and there’s your shawl. You must make your cap from your hankies, and you could tie this big silk one round your waist for an apron.”

“So I could! Oh, Tom, what a super idea! But what about mittens?”

For a moment Tom was gravelled. Then she nodded. “You’ll have to *paint* them on your hands. Haven’t you black paint or something in your box?”

“Yes, I have! That’s fine! Now what for Rosalie?”

Rosalie was more difficult. Tom stared at her, frowning, while the young lady herself waited impatiently. Then she nodded reluctantly. “I want to go as a cowboy. You pair off with me and be a cowgirl.”

“But how would you do that?” Rosalie asked, wide-eyed. “It would be lovely, of course, but—don’t cow-people wear huge hats? And we haven’t any. And the men have leather fringes down their legs.”

“I thought perhaps if you’d lend me your jodhpurs,” said Tom. “But I’d forgotten the fringes and the hats. *That* idea won’t work then!”

Amy had run off to seek Matron and the newspapers so the pair were alone. Tom sat down on Rosalie’s bed, and supported her chin on her fists as she stared into space, thinking hard. She had done it, of course. Whatever she went as, it must be something in which Rosalie could pair with her. The question was—what?

“What about the Babes in the Wood?” suggested that young lady.

“Too sloppy,” Tom said curtly. “We aren’t K.G. kids.”

This stopped Rosalie from suggesting Jack and Jill, which was the only other thing she could think of. “You can have my jodhpurs,” she said half-shyly. “P’r’aps we could think of something separate for me.”

Tom looked at her. “No, we’ll go together,” she replied—and had her reward, if she wanted it, in the delight that flashed into Rosalie’s face. Suddenly she jumped up. “Got it! We’ll be Solomon and the Queen of Sheba! That ’ud be easy enough—or it ought to be. Let’s see your dressing gown.”

Rosalie produced it—a pretty green robe of fine wool, with wide sleeves, and waistband of stitched silk. Rosalie was a rich man’s child and all her possessions showed it. Tom nodded when she saw it.

“That’s the ticket! We’ll undo this sash-affair and tie it at the back. Then we must get something for a veil, and you go round and borrow all the strings of beads you can get.”

“And what about you?” Rosalie asked.

“I’ll wear *my* dressing gown, and I’ll get some cardboard and make a fez kind of hat. The beard’ll be the hardest to wangle.”

“I’ve got some cotton wool. My brooches and things are wrapped in it. I’ll get it and show you!” Rosalie jumped up from the floor where she had been squatting, fished out a pretty box which was filled with cotton wool, holding the three or four brooches and her wrist watch, and pulled it out, laying the trinkets back in the box. “Would this do? It *is* white, but perhaps we could colour it with water paints.”

“No, we couldn’t do that. It would never dry in time. But I’ll tell you what! We could squash some pastels—black or brown ones—and rub it in them.” Tom said.

“How would you keep it on?” Rosalie asked doubtfully.

“Glue, of course. Come on! Let’s get cracking!” Tom jumped up, and then turned to eye with dismay the silk blouse on which she had been sitting. “Oh lor’! Look at your blouse! Whatever will Matey say? I’m sorry, Rosalie, but I never noticed.”

“Never mind.” Rosalie was not unduly perturbed. “I’ll shove it in my soiled linen bag and she’ll just think I’ve been wearing it.”

Tom the straightforward was having nothing to do with this sort of thing. “Oh, no, you won’t! I’m going straight to her to tell her. You can’t cheat like that, Rosalie. It jolly well isn’t the game.”

“Won’t she be angry with you? What does it matter?”

“I tell you it’s not the game. It’s acting a lie, if it’s not telling one, and I won’t do that. Neither must you.”

“O-oh! I didn’t think of it like that. All right, but I’m coming with you, Tom, ’cos it was partly my fault for tossing things about like that.”

Tom’s face, which had clouded over, cleared now. “There isn’t any need. I should have looked before I sat down. Come to that, I shouldn’t have sat on the bed at all. It isn’t allowed. Look here, give it to me, and I’ll go and tell her while you clear up this mess. It’s half term, so don’t suppose she’ll say much, anyhow. Yes, I mean it. You clear up while I’m gone.” And before Rosalie could say any more, Tom had vanished to Matron, to confess her sins, and beg one of the muslin squares which formed the “angels” wings’ cap Matron always wore.

She was quite right about Matron being more lenient at half term. That small lady laughed when she saw the blouse, spoke a warning about the harm done to a bed by sitting on it, and

produced the square with a crisp "There you are, and please tell Rosalie to take care of it. Is there anything else you want while you're here?"

Tom thought. "Could I have some cardboard, please, Matron? And a pair of big scissors?"

"I can manage that. Why do you want it?"

"I want to make a kind of fez. I thought I could do it with that."

Matron went to a drawer, rummaged for a minute or two, and then produced a real Turkish fez. "Wouldn't this be better? I'll lend it to you, but don't lose it."

"Oh, Matron, thanks awfully!" Tom said fervently. "No, I don't want anything else, thank you. This is wizard!"

"No slang!" Matron said austere. "Run along now, I'm busy."

Tom ran, and presently she and Rosalie were busy doing their best to rig her up according to a picture of Solomon they had found in one of the picture Bibles belonging to the Juniors. It was rather difficult, for Tom was the daughter of a poor vicarage, and her clothes were strictly utilitarian. To convert her plain blue flannel dressing gown into something appropriate to the magnificence of Solomon was quite a task.

But if Rosalie was short of ideas she had dainty fingers, and sewed beautifully. She took over the job of adorning the dressing gown while Tom ground down the black and brown pastels which they owned, and then rubbed the cotton wool into the resultant mess. It was not exactly a success but as she herself said. "It's a lot better than nothing, anyhow."

The rain poured steadily down all day, but no one complained, for all were busy up to the last minute before the dressing-bell went. Then they all scuttled upstairs to the dormitories, and when the bell was rung to summon them to Hall, such a motley throng came down the great staircase, which was forbidden to them as a rule, that Miss Annersley said in an aside to such of the staff as were near enough to hear her, "It is certainly going to be a fearful job to choose the prize winners! No one can say our girls aren't ingenious when they're put to it!"

There were a good many geishas, thanks to kimono-like summer dressing gowns, and several people had made flower-frocks for themselves from the crinkled paper to be found in most of the common room cupboards. Dorcas Brownlow had got herself up as a real gypsy in a ragged frock, with her usually neat hair combed into a tousled wig, curtain-rings tied to her ears, and sundry chains of beads round her neck. She had darkened her skin with an application of black tea, and borrowed a basket from the kitchen and all the clothes-pegs from the laundry. Gay Lambert had contrived a "Bubbles" suit from dark green knickers, a green blouse belonging to someone else, and three lace collars tacked together and gathered round her neck. With her mop of golden curls the character would have been unmistakable even if she hadn't carried a small basin and clay pipe. Her chum, Jacynth Hardy, had made a Dutch Doll of herself, parting her hair in the middle and plastering it flat with olive oil begged from the kitchen. She had painted a scarlet spot on each cheek, and dressed herself in one of her school gingham, with a little muslin apron round her waist. Someone was a Nun; someone else was a Highwayman, with her summer coat turned inside out to show the gay lining, and her Guide hat pinned up into a tricorne. The Bathing Twins were greeted with yells of laughter and applause, and Amy, the sweetest little Granny ever seen, also got a round of applause that made her pink cheeks crimson. The Queen of Sheba looked very grand; but Tom bore away the palm. Rosalie had borrowed coloured silk handkerchiefs from everyone, folded them into strips, and tacked them down the sides and along the hem of the dressing gown and into a girdle, so that it looked quite gaudy, even without the powdering of frosting which she had found in a Junior's box and with which she had dusted the flannel till it glittered. It is true that

someone rather unkindly said, "Hello, Bluebeard! The beard's the wrong colour, isn't it?" but no one was going to mind a little thing like that.

The prizes were awarded halfway through the evening, and Tom's face when she heard that she and Rosalie had won the prize for the most ingenious costume among the Middles was worth seeing. The Bathing Twins won for the most original, and Amy had a consolation for the most applicable. All told, Upper Third had given a good account of itself. Dorcas, Gay, and Jacynth also won prizes, and so did Mollie Avery, who had turned herself into a pillar box with sheets of cardboard stitched together, and a large slit through which her beaming face showed. Underneath was a notice that chocolates and sweets were the only "letters" to be posted in *that* particular box.

Halfway through the evening. Tom and most of her beard parted company, for the heat of the room and also of Solomon after several rowdy skipping dances melted the glue. Enough remained, however, to make hard scrubbing very necessary at bed-time. The Gypsy, too, spent a good twenty minutes reducing her brown locks to their usual neatness; and Matron insisted on the Dutch Doll sleeping with a towel doubled over her pillow; and, Sunday or not, she had to wash her hair next day to get the oil out.

Even so, everyone voted it one of the jolliest parties they had ever known, and the staff, as they took themselves to their beds with weary bodies, were satisfied. It had been truly worth all the trouble.

CHAPTER 8

Rosalie Flares Up Again

Sunday was spent in their usual quiet way, and on Monday they had the promised visit to Stratford, and went to the theatre in the evening. It was terribly late when they returned to the school, and, by order of Miss Annersley, they were not wakened till nine o'clock next morning. It was a beautiful day, and after breakfast she ordained that they should rest quietly about the grounds. The rest of the school would be back by tea time, and she meant to send everyone to bed early.

"Thank heaven it's only once in a way," she told Miss Wilson. "What are you going to do with yourself, Nell? I've some letters that simply *must* be answered, and I'm going down to Plas Gwyn to see Jo after lunch."

"I'm going this morning. I rang up while you were issuing your edict to the girls, and Jack said it would be all right. Jo's coming along nicely now. Thank goodness, once she does begin to improve she does it at a run!"

"When did Jo ever do anything else?" Miss Annersley demanded, laughing. "She is the most wholesale creature I've ever known!"

Meanwhile the girls made their beds, and then took books and needlework out under the trees on the lawn. The Juniors sprawled happily on rugs round Miss Linton, who read to them, while the rest made up clumps under the trees and occupied themselves as they had been asked. Tom, sitting with her own crowd, writing a long letter home, had Rosalie beside her, that young lady having buried the hatchet thoroughly.

Perhaps they were all still very tired after the unusually late night. Perhaps they were upset by all the excitements they had had. It is certain that most of them were what nannies call "crotchety". Primrose Day and Elfie Woodward both wanted the same magazine, which Primrose had taken first. Elfie tried to read over her shoulder; Primrose ordered her to "stop it, and get your own book!" in no uncertain tones. When Elfie, whose ankle was aching after Miss Burn's very thorough massage, snapped back, it ended in Primrose throwing the magazine at her, getting up, and stalking off in a very bad temper.

Nancy Canton, one of the prefects, who happened to be sitting near enough to see the whole affair, came up, calling Primrose to her, and rated them both sharply. Elfie burst into tears, and Primrose said as sulkily as she dared, "Well, it wasn't my fault! I had the mag first, and she'd no right to try and read over my shoulder when I told her not."

Nancy, who was in none too sweet a mood herself, ordered Elfie off to Matron for leave to lie down for a nap; marched Primrose to a lonely seat at the far side of the lawn, where she left her with orders to stay there till she could behave decently; and then returned to Mollie Avery to grumble. "Those kids are the edge! They deserve a good smacking, both of them, and I'd like to be the one to give it!"

Bride, who had gone to beg leave to go to see Auntie Jo and the new baby and been refused, was sitting hunched up unsociably at the edge of the rug, very unlike sunshiny Bride. She snarled at anyone who spoke to her, and finally they let her alone. The Ozanne twins had one of their spats over nothing at all, so far as anyone could see, and ended up by removing their seats as far apart as they could. Then the worst burst of all came from Rosalie.

She had brought out her library book and some knitting, and was lying in her deck chair, yawning over the story, when Tom, jumping up to go and get an envelope for her letter, caught her foot in the knitting, which was on the ground, nearly tripped, and in the complicated squirm with which she contrived to keep upright snapped one of the needles.

Rosalie uttered a cry of woe. "Oh, *Tom!* Now I can't go on with it!"

"Oh, well, sorry," Tom replied airily. "I'll get someone to buy you some new ones when they go to town. You shouldn't have left it there, anyhow."

"Why not? You haven't bought up the place, have you?" snapped Rosalie.

"Don't be such an ass! Anyhow, knitting *oughtn't* to be lying all over the show like that!" Tom retorted. "If you'd had it in your lap, it wouldn't have happened. Anyhow, I *said* I was sorry."

"That won't mend the needle! You *are* a clumsy thing!"

"Oh, fiddle! You're acting like a spoiled kid!"

There was a good deal of truth in this, but it was not exactly oil on troubled waters. All her wrongs came crowding in on Rosalie as she surveyed her work, which she had picked up. As she realized that the broken needle was the one on which the stitches were, her wrath broke out.

"You *pig!* Just look at that! Half the stitches are off, and running down, and it'll take ages and ages to pick them up again! I wish you'd look where you're going, Tom Gay, instead of flying about like a mad eagle!"

Two or three people went into peals of laughter at this remarkable simile, and even Tom, who was losing her own temper now, was forced to grin as she responded, "Mad eagle yourself! Do have a little sense!" She was going on to say again that she was sorry, but Rosalie gave her no chance. She snatched up her book and the maltreated knitting, and started to bound out of her chair.

Now, as anyone who has tried to do it can tell you, a deck chair is one of the last things you can bound from. Rosalie caught her foot in the bottom bar, staggered halfway up, and then fell back, unfortunately landing on one side of the frame, which promptly collapsed flat under such treatment. Rosalie came down with a bump which jarred her from head to foot, and put the finishing touch to her anger. She struggled to her feet, scarlet with rage, her blue eyes flashing, and turned on Tom with all her might.

"You're a pig. Tom Gay—a complete and utter pig! I hate you—I wish I'd never seen you! I hate you all! This is a loathsome school, and I wish I'd never come to it!"

"Ditto to you!" Vanna Ozanne retorted, firing up in defence of the school. "Can't think why you did, either. A kid like you ought to be in the nursery—not a school!"

"And just you hold your tongue about the school!" Bride added, coming out of her sulks to join in. "It's a jolly decent one, let me tell you, and a sight too good for a little mucker like you!"

"You trot off by yourself till you've got over your temper," Anne Webster advised, rather more quietly, for she felt a little responsibility for a member of her dormitory. "You can't talk like that, you know."

Tom, who had been eyeing Rosalie's flushed face, now added her quota. "You're tired with yesterday. Go and ask Matey to let you lie down like Elfie, and then you'll feel better."

She meant well, for Tom's temper was quickly over, but Rosalie thought the other girl was making fun of her. She glared helplessly at them all for a minute. Then she gave a peculiar sound, half-squawk, half-sob, and turned and fled, the ball of wool which had fallen off the

other needle trailing gaily after her. They called to her, but she took no notice. She rushed blindly towards the house, then turned and made for the shrubbery, into which she disappeared, leaving them looking uncertainly at each other.

“Where’s she gone to?” Vanna asked at last. “And just look at that wool! It’s right across the lawn.”

Tom went to pick up what was left of the ball and wind it up. At the far edge of the lawn she found Primrose, still in exile, with the knitting in her hand, staring open-mouthed in the direction the fugitive had taken.

She spoke eagerly as Tom reached her. “I say! What on earth’s the matter with Rosalie? She came tearing past here, all red, and howling, and she chucked this thing at me when I asked her what was the matter, and just went on, bawling! Is she ill or something?”

Tom took the knitting from her. “It was my fault, I s’pose. I got up in a hurry, and trod on the thing and smashed the needle. She got mad and said things—and so did the rest of us. Then she suddenly rushed off like that.” She looked at the knitting. “I say, Prim, you’re a nib at this sort of thing. Can’t you borrow another needle from somewhere and yank those stitches up for her? She was awfully upset about it, and *I* can’t do it.”

Primrose had recovered her temper, and she was a kind-hearted girl. “Of course I will. But what a little spitfire! All right, Tom, I’ll see if someone can lend me another needle. I haven’t one as fine as this. Where’s Nancy Canton, by the way?” she added cautiously.

“She and Mollie Avery went off just before all this happened.”

“Just as well, or she’d be pitching into all you others. What do you think is wrong with Rosalie, Tom?”

“Oh, I dunno! Tired, p’r’aps. She was yawning all over the shop.”

“Are you going after her?”

Tom hesitated. Then she shook her head. “Best not, I expect. Let her get over it first. We did have a real old barney about things, and she seems to take things like that badly—silly goose! Come on back, Prim. No one’ll say anything now. Anyhow, it’s nearly time for elevenses.”

The pair returned to the startled group under the trees, where Primrose succeeded in borrowing another knitting-needle from Amy, and set to work to pick up the stitches, while the rest plied Tom with questions as to where she thought Rosalie had gone.

Tom refused to gossip. “In the shrubbery, I suppose. Let her alone till she feels better. And I say, you folk! When she does come back, let’s say nothing about all this. She’ll be feeling rotten about it, I guess.”

No one said anything for a moment. Then Nella spoke. “But she called the school names, Tom. We can’t let her do that.”

“Don’t suppose she meant a thing really. Besides,” went on Tom with a sudden flush, “if you come to that, I said a few things myself when I first came.”

“Yes, but that was because you didn’t understand,” Bride said. “You were all right as soon as you did.”

“Well, so I expect she’ll be. She’s not been at a proper school before, any more’n I had. Besides, she’s so—kind of—*soft*! She can’t take things, and I can. I vote we let up on it.”

“Oh, very well. But she can hold her tongue about the school,” Bride said with decision. “There’s the gong for elevenses. Leave that mess in your chair, Primrose, and come on, you folk. Megan makes such a fuss if we’re late.”

They moved off in a body, and no more was said, even after they had returned to their place feeling much better for milk and biscuits, and Primrose had set to work again to repair the damage heedless Tom had done.

That was all very well. No one had expected Rosalie to come for her milk and biscuits, for they all guessed shrewdly that she was hidden somewhere in the shrubbery, having her cry. But when they marched in to dinner, and her chair was empty, it was another matter.

This being half term, they sat where they liked, and the prefect at their table never missed Rosalie, so no one said anything. Miss Annersley told them they were to spend the afternoon as they had done the morning. Tea would be at five, when the last absentee should have returned, and after tea they would have games and dancing till supper time, and then they were all to go to bed.

Having told them this, she said Grace, and the girls went out again. The members of Upper Third retired to their old place, and gathered together to discuss the latest happening.

“Do you think we ought to tell someone Rosalie wasn’t at dinner?” Primrose asked.

“Well—who?” Bride demanded. “She’ll get into an awful row if they find out, and it might be just that she cried, and then went to sleep. Tom’s right, you know. She *was* tired. She kept on yawning, and made me yawn, too. Matey’d be mad all right if she knew, and so would Bill, even if it is half term. We aren’t supposed not to be at meals unless we’ve got leave to stay away. Even Elfie was there, though Matey has sent her back to the dormy to rest again.”

“What about telling Miss Annersley?” Vanna suggested.

“*She* might be better,” Bride agreed.

The sound of a motor made them look round, and they saw Hilary Burn driving Miss Annersley’s little car with the owner inside. She waved to them, and they waved back automatically. Then they looked at each other again.

“Well, *that’s* no use!” Tom voiced the feelings of all. “Wonder where she’s going, and if she’ll be away all afternoon?”

“She’ll have gone to Auntie Jo’s,” Bride declared. “Oh, I *do* think it mean not to let me! We’ve seen nothing of her all this term. And then there’s the baby. I’m dying to see him!”

“Never mind that! You’ll see them both soon enough,” Tom said. “We’ve got to think what we’re going to do about Rosalie. I don’t see that we can tell anyone. It’s sneaking!”

Anne Webster looked thoughtful. She was the oldest of them, being almost fourteen, and she knew enough to realize that there are occasions when telling someone older is not sneaking.

“Listen!” she said abruptly. “I think we ought to go and see if we can find her first. She oughtn’t to be lying about on the ground sleeping. If we *can’t* find her after a decent time—say, an hour—then we jolly well *must* let someone know. She might have gone further, and tripped over something and sprained her ankle like Elfie did last term. We wouldn’t know which way to go and it’s a huge place if we have to go hunting all over. We should have to get someone to help.”

They looked very serious. Then Bride nodded. “I see. Yes, Anne, I think you’re right. Sorry, Tom, but it really won’t be sneaking—not in that way. And if Anne is right, and Rosalie’s hurt herself, then we’d have to tell someone sooner or later.”

“I s’pose so, but I do so hate telling on anyone!” Tom said.

“Bride’s told you it isn’t proper sneaking,” Vanna said sharply. “So has Anne, and they’re both older than you, so I should think they might know best. Anyhow, we’ve just got to do it—unless we find her.”

“Let’s hope we find her, then!” Tom sounded very gruff. “Come on! What are we daddering about here for? Let’s get cracking.”

“Wait! We can’t all go streaking off like that!” said Anne peremptorily. “If anyone sees us they’ll come and ask what we think we’re doing when we’ve been told to rest. We’ll have to go in twos and threes. Here, Tom, you and Bride go first. You twins can follow on, and Prim and Amy and I’ll follow. Go down to the old Spanish chestnut, and wait there till we come. Then we can divide it up and do the thing properly. Prim, you sit down and get on with that knitting till it’s time for us to go. You others get your books or something. Go on, Tom and Bride.”

Thanks to her quick wits, they all managed to get to the shrubbery unsuspected, and met under the Spanish chestnut. Here Anne portioned out the shrubbery among them, and then they parted and set to work to hunt. But, hunt as they might, no sign of the missing Rosalie was to be found. No bush was left undisturbed. Bride, walking backwards, and staring up into the branches of a big lime in case Rosalie should have climbed up into it, tripped up over a fallen bough, and was just saved from going headlong by Anne, who came up behind her. Tom emerged from a struggle with some closely growing laurels with her frock streaked with black, and her hair wild. All was in vain. Rosalie was clearly nowhere in the shrubbery. So much was plain.

Vanna, greatly daring, had climbed up the wall which sheltered the rose garden at one end, and dropped down again to report that most of the mistresses and Matron were there, so Rosalie obviously wasn’t!

Finally, Anne glanced at her watch and called a halt.

“We can’t find her! We’ve looked for more than an hour, and I don’t see how we could have missed her here, anyhow. We’ve just got to go and tell someone.”

Amy’s round, rosy face turned into a long one. “Oh, d-do you think she’s badly hurt?” she quavered.

“Rot!” said Tom forcefully. “She must have gone through here and gone somewhere else. I s’pose Anne’s right, and we’ve got to go and split now. Well, talking isn’t going to make it any nicer. Let’s go and *do* it.” She began to move off, thankful for something they *could* do. Even she saw now that they could hardly leave things as they were. No one had seen anything of the missing Rosalie for more than five hours, so the grown-ups must be told. “And the sooner the better!” thought Tom.

They knew where to find the staff. They left the shrubbery and went to the rose garden, where the mistresses, still taking their ease for a final half-hour, stopped what they were doing, and stared in amazement when the raggie-taggle throng invaded their peace.

Anne led the way to Miss Wilson, who raised her eyebrows till they nearly disappeared into the white, wavy hair above her brows, and blurted it out. “Please, Miss Wilson, we’ve lost Rosalie!”

CHAPTER 9

A Real Chalet School Girl

"Is that Plas Gwyn? I want to speak to Miss Annersley, please."

"Will you hold on, and I'll bring her." It was Daisy's voice. "It's Miss Wilson, isn't it?"

"Yes. That you, Daisy? Hurry up and tell Miss Annersley I want her."

Miss Wilson turned to such of the staff as were with her in the office. "It's time Hilda was back! She can't have been with Jo all this time. It's almost six now. Daisy's there, too, evidently."

Mlle de Lachenais nodded. "Tell Hilda to bring Daisy with her. What Daisy does not know about these grounds I should imagine no one else does. She and Gwensi are so friendly, and I am sure Gwensi has told her all the Plas Howell secrets. Perhaps she could help us."

"Well, it's to be hoped she can—or someone else, anyhow. Where *is* Gwensi, by the way? She ought to be here by this time! Didn't she go home with the Chester girls?"

"Yes, but Dr Chester rang up to ask if the girls might stay till tomorrow morning and he would bring them over first thing, as he is due at the San for a consultation," observed Rosalie Dene. "Didn't Hilda tell you?"

"Never said a word about it to me. Oh, here she is! That you, Hilda? Look here, you'll have to come back at once, and bring Daisy with you. Rosalie Way has vanished. She seems to have had a row with some of her own crowd and gone off crying. No one has seen anything of her since before eleven. What's that? No, she wasn't. As they weren't sitting at their own tables, Esther Collins never noticed she wasn't there—no blame to her, either. The rest of the little ninnies went to hunt, but failed to find her, and never reported it until nearly four o'clock. We have scoured the place as far as we can since then, and there isn't a sign of her. If she doesn't turn up soon, we'll have to wire her folk. I suppose, though how she could get home on the small amount of cash she has, I don't know. This isn't like last summer when Gay went off. Thanks to our affair, no one had taken Bank, and Gay had all her own money and what Jacynth and Gillian could lend her. But Bank was seen to the night the girls came back, and Rosalie can't have more than three or four shillings, if that.—You will? Good! I've had every prefect and mistress I could lay hands on out hunting, and so far with no results at all. I'll be thankful to see you and hand over, I can tell you!"

Miss Wilson slammed the receiver back on its cradle, and turned to the others. "Well, that's that! She's coming, and Daisy with her. We may get somewhere then. I wonder—do you think we ought to ring up the Chesters and ask for Gwensi to come tonight?"

"How would she get here?" Hilary Burn asked practically. "The last bus will have left before she could get into Armiford. Dr Chester would bring her if he's in but he may not be."

"Perhaps—if you rang up and asked to speak to her?" Mlle suggested. "Let us wait until Hilda returns with Daisy. If Daisy cannot help, then we can ring up Gwensi, n'est-ce pas?"

"Very well, we'll do that," Miss Wilson assented. "Have all the Seniors come back yet? Does anyone know?"

"I'll go and ask." Rosalie Dene made for the door. "Where will you be when I come back? Not here, I suppose?"

"You suppose right. We'll be in the library. Mlle, you might go and see what the rest of the imps are doing. I don't want any more trouble than we have already." Miss Wilson swung off

with her long, graceful step which had made Gay Lambert once liken her to a greyhound, and Mlle went to the common rooms, to return to the library later and report that everyone was quiet, either reading, writing, working, or making jigsaws. No one had wanted games or dancing when Rosalie Way was missing. Indeed, Amy had cried herself into a headache, and Matron had sent her to bed.

Luckily for all concerned. Miss Annersley arrived as quickly as some very risky driving on Hilary Burn's part could bring her, and Daisy was with her, and Daisy quickly settled the problem.

"If she's nowhere obvious, I can guess where the little ass has gone," remarked that damsel when she had heard the whole tale.

The two Heads turned on her in a flash. "Where is it?"

Daisy shook her head. "I can't exactly tell you that. Beth and I promised Gwensi years and years ago we'd keep it a dead secret, and though I don't suppose she'd really mind anyone knowing now, I'm not breaking my word—unless I can ring the Chesters and ask her."

"By all means do—and hurry up about it!" Miss Annersley sounded annoyed, but Daisy was quite calm about it.

"Right! I'll go at once and do it," she said, with a disregard for the proper way to address one's Heads which might have called down a sharp rebuke on her at another time. As it was, no one even heeded it.

She ran off to the office, to return presently and say, "It's all right! Gwen says I can tell. And anyhow," she added, "we'll have to let one of the kids into the secret. We haven't been there for ages, but I don't suppose I can wriggle through there now. It'll need someone like Tom Gay for that."

"But where is it?" Miss Annersley demanded, looking as she would have liked to shake the information out of Daisy.

"Remember that time just after we came here when Gwen and Beth and I were missing?" Daisy asked. "Gwen had shown us two her secret hiding-place. I'll bet young Rosalie has found it, and is hidden there."

"Oh, do stop *yattering!*" Hilary Burn said sharply. "You might think how worried we all are! Where is this wonderful place of yours?"

"You know the yew hedge beyond the shrubbery? Well, you get in there and crawl along on all fours. Then you come to a kind of little cave made by the yew. When we went missing, we'd gone on, and it comes out into the hornbeam hedge, where there's a regular little arbour with a tunnel leading from it down to the river. That's where those two beauties, Owen Owens and Griffith Owens, used to go to poach salmon. Owen Owens used to be one of the gardeners here, you know. Gwen and Beth and I used to keep the tunnel cut back, but we haven't been near it for at least two years now so I expect it'll be grown over rather. That's the worst of growing up!" Daisy added with an elderly sigh. "Things like that aren't the fun they used to be. Shall I get young Tom and send her through?"

"Yes—and be quick about it!" Miss Wilson snapped, jumping to her feet as she spoke. "Hilda, you'd better stay here and take charge. *You* can't go messing about in yew hedges—not unless you want a headache. You may be fit, but you've still got to be careful after the smash-up last year. Hilary, go and get Gillian Linton, and you two come with us. I don't suppose Rosalie is any the worse for crawling inside the hedge but it's quite likely she'll be stiff with being there, and may need to be carried in a queen's chair."

She whisked off, Hilary in her wake. Daisy had fled a minute or two before to call Tom Gay out of the common room, where she was trying to take an interest in *Kim*, and race out to the garden with her. They were beside the hedge when the mistresses reached them, and Tom was standing in liberty bodice and knickers, her frock in Daisy's hand.

"What on earth—?" began Miss Wilson.

"To save the frock being torn, and make it easier for Tom to get through," Daisy explained quickly. "It's hot enough. She won't hurt."

"Oh, very well. Now where is the entry to this place of yours?"

"Through here." Daisy stooped down, pulling a branch aside, and showed a gap. "Go through here, Tom, and turn to the right. I don't suppose Rosalie went as far as the hornbeam. I expect you'll find her in the yew cave. Go carefully. Have you a knife in case you need it?"

Tom nodded. "In my frock pocket. May I?" She felt in the pocket, and drew out what Daisy, retelling the story to Gwensi and Beth later, described as "a regular gully knife! How she managed not to tear the pocket from the frock with its weight is more than I can say!"

Miss Wilson's brows went up at the sight, and she mentally decided to speak to Matron about it, but she was too anxious about Rosalie to do anything more at the time.

Thus equipped, Tom dived into the heart of the old yew hedge, and vanished from sight. They could hear the leaves and branches rustling as she forced her way through the thick undergrowth. Then she seemed to stop. A moment later they heard her proclaim in clarion tones, "It's all right! This is where she is! I've found a chunk of her frock."

At the same time, there came a frightened cry from further along of, "Tom! Oh, is that you? Please come to me, Tom! I can't move!"

Miss Wilson went white, her mind at once leaping to the conclusion that Rosalie must have broken a leg or injured her spine. Though how she imagined either could have happened as a result of merely crawling along inside a hedge, it is hard to say. Hilary Burn saw it, and put an arm round her.

"Steady on, Nell!" she murmured. "I expect the silly little idiot has got caught in the branches somehow. Heaven help her frock!"

The colour came back to the Head's face. "I'm an ass! But I thought of Eustacia—do you remember in the Tyrol?—and was afraid it was something bad."

"Eustacia sprained her back muscles with scrambling up the hillside to escape the flood," Hilary returned in her most matter-of-fact tones. "There's nothing of the kind to worry about here."

They heard Tom scrabbling for about three minutes. Then she shouted, "She's here, Miss Wilson!" Suddenly her tone changed. "Oh, I say! What an awful mess! How on earth am I going to get you free?"

"What is it, Tom?" called Miss Wilson frantically.

Tom appeared to be deaf. Then they heard her say, "Well, for pity's sake don't howl! I'll have to cut it, I s'pose! Now keep still while I get going. I won't pull if I can help it, but I may have to give a tug or two."

Gillian Linton quickly leapt to the right conclusion, and she collapsed on the ground, nearly doubled up with laughter. "Oh-oh-oh! The young nunny's copied Absalom! She's caught by her hair, and Tom's having to crop her with that—that *dirk* of hers! What on earth will she look like when they get out?"

Judging by the sounds—Hilary declared afterwards that it sounded like a pair of young elephants struggling together!—and the one or two squawks, that was just what Tom was

doing. Then they heard Rosalie, "Ow! That hurts!" To which Tom's answer came clearly, "Well, it's this or stay here till you grow into a yew yourself! Keep *still!*"

By this time Miss Wilson and Hilary were also rocking with mirth, and it was with difficulty that all three contrived to straighten their faces when they heard, "There! That's the last! Now get down and follow me, and we'll soon have you out of this! Come on—scram!"

The rustlings increased fivefold, and at last Tom emerged, very dirty and tousled, followed by a Rosalie whose appearance was a real shock. Most of the front breadth of her frock was in Tom's hand. Her hair had been sawn off roughly all across one side, and stood out from her head in a series of little tails and tufts that made Hilary wickedly murmur to Gillian, "Topsy from *Uncle Tom's Cabin!*" Her face was white where it was not streaked with dirt, and she had obviously cried violently, for her eyes were all swollen and red. Altogether, a more abject little sight it would have been hard to find.

Miss Wilson took charge at once. "So here you are, Rosalie! Well, Miss Burn and Miss Linton will carry you to the house, and Matron will see you have a good meal and a bath, and then, I think, bed will be best. Now don't begin to cry again! You've done quite enough of that, I should think! We'll talk things over in the morning when you've had a good sleep. Make a queen's chair, you two," to the two younger mistresses, who were fighting manfully with their giggles and were scarlet and breathless as a result. "There you are! Now take her to Matron. Daisy, help Tom to put on her frock, please, and then you two can come back to school. Come along!" And she marched her juniors and their burden off to Matron, who, after one look at the red-eyed scarecrow handed over to her, hustled her off to bath and bed, and then brought up her supper, and stayed with her till she fell asleep in the San.

"I'll keep her there for a day or two," the school tyrant told Miss Annersley when she joined the rest of the staff in the library. "She's worn out, and a good rest won't hurt her. I'll tidy up her head tomorrow, and she must come to Armiford with me when she gets up to have it properly trimmed. What are you going to do about breaking the news to her people?"

"I don't really know," the Head confessed. "I must think it over."

"I'll tell you," Rosalie Dene said. "Make her write home and tell them the story herself. It's her own silly fault, you know."

"I'll think about it." Miss Annersley refused to commit herself.

Matron kept the young lady where she was till the Thursday. Then she took her over to Armiford, and when the school went in to dinner that day, it was to find a neatly bobbed Rosalie standing behind her chair, waiting for them. No one said anything to her, the Heads having forbidden any remarks on the subject unless she first spoke of it to them herself. As it was games afternoon, no one had much time to talk and Rosalie held her tongue about the whole affair both that day and the next, and all Saturday morning. But in the afternoon, when they were all squatted on rugs round the cricket field, watching the match between their own first eleven and that of Red Gables, another school some ten miles distant, she turned at the end of an over while the fielders were crossing, and looked at them.

"I've been a most ghastly idiot! I've had to write home and tell Mummy and Daddy all about it and why I've had to have my hair cut, too. Mummy will be fearfully upset. She loved my ringlets."

"Oh, well, she'll get over that!" Tom said soothingly. "She's got plenty of time for it. We don't break up for nearly five weeks yet, and she'll have got used to the idea by that time."

"And anyhow, your hair's lots prettier in all those little curls like Gay Lambert's," added Primrose Day. "I wouldn't worry about it, Rosalie."

“Besides, think of the time you’ll save in the mornings now you haven’t got all those ringlets to arrange!” This was Bride’s contribution.

But Rosalie was not to be denied, though the “only child” attitude towards life had a very little time left for her. “I’ve been simply silly,” she said mournfully.

“So you have—awfully silly,” Tom agreed briskly. “So have most of the rest of us at one time or another if you come to that. You aren’t any worse than the rest of us, so don’t start thinking you are! The best thing you can do is to hoe in and get a little common sense like we all have to do. Who’s bowling this end? Oh, Daisy! Well, let’s hope she gets that girl out, or we shan’t have a look in!”

They dropped the subject, rather to Rosalie’s disappointment, and eagerly watched Daisy, her long fair plait twisted round her head under her wide-brimmed panama—the sun was blazing down on the pitch, and bowlers, fielders, and batsmen all had to have some sort of protection for their eyes—as she walked back from the wicket for her preliminary run, running the ball nervously between her hands. A three was hit off her first delivery, for nervousness had made her pitch it short. The next gave a single, and then the Red Gables captain faced the bowling again. She stood at the wicket, looking very big and confident with thirty-nine runs to her credit, and the score at fifty with just three wickets down. Daisy began her run, and sent the ball down, and the Red Gables girl was all set to slash it to the boundary. But lo and behold! It curled round her bat, and snicked off a bail and she was out!

Up rose a roar from Tom Gay of “Well bowled, Daisy! Oh, *jolly* well bowled! Yell up, you chaps!”

Upper Third, and, indeed, all the school, responded nobly to her appeal, and Rosalie, after looking doubtfully at them, tossed her own feelings to the winds and joined in the shouting for Daisy as wholeheartedly as any of them, a real Chalet School girl at last.

[The end of The Chalet School and Rosalie by Elinor Mary Brent-Dyer]