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# GIRL'S DETECTIVE MYSTERIES

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# GIRL'S DETECTIVE MYSTERIES

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*The mysterious man leered at Betty as she hurried past.*

A BETTY BAKER ADVENTURE

# THE SECRET OF THE HIDDEN CAVE

*The story of a girl detective who solves a thrilling  
mystery and at the same time clears up an old case  
that has baffled the police authorities for years*

by

RUTH ROYCE

## CHAPTER I

### An Uninvited Guest

“**W**HAT a dark night,” Betty Baker mused as she drew back the lace curtains from the large bay window that looked out on the spacious lawn of her suburban home. “There’s not a star in the sky. It’s a good thing I had all the doors and windows closed before this wind came up. Being here all alone during a storm gives me the creeps.”

Outside the Autumn wind moaned as it bent the tall trees, causing them to creak eerily.

“It’s almost as though I were sure something dreadful was about to happen,” she shuddered as she curled herself in the corner of the lounge and opened a schoolbook she had been trying to study.

Betty didn’t like being alone in the house. It made her nervous and uneasy. She wouldn’t have minded so much if there had been neighbors nearby; but for some reason her father had chosen this house off by itself on the edge of the woods.

It was only a few miles to the little city of Maplevue, located in the central part of Kentucky—but on nights such as this Betty’s

little home seemed to be on the edge of nowhere.

During the summer months the woods were beautiful, filled with all kinds of wildflowers. Then the stately old trees nodded friendly heads toward her bedroom window; but now with the approach of winter all looked dead and sorrowful.

It was at times like this that Betty thought of her mother who had died when she was six. She had been cared for by an old friend who acted as housekeeper. Aunt Martha, Betty called her. She was a kindly soul and quite old and deaf. Betty loved her dearly.

Betty was a wide-awake American girl of fifteen whose warm personality and courteous manner had made her a favorite with everyone who knew her; and there were few in Mapleview who did not know her. Her slender, active figure was known everywhere by butcher and baker and candlestick maker, and when she smiled her eyes seemed to dance. There were many who said that she was the image of her mother, but there were more who said she had inherited the keen mind of her father.

Mr. Baker was a retired judge and it wasn't often that he was away from home. But an old case had come up in court that day and the judge had been called in to help. He had expected to be home for dinner because he knew that a close relative of Aunt Martha's had passed away several days before and that she was attending the funeral in a nearby town; but evidently the case had taken longer than he had expected.

Betty could not help thinking about the case her father had been called in on. She was only ten when it happened but she remembered it quite clearly, for it had been one of the most baffling mysteries the community had ever known. A wealthy woman had disappeared completely, vanished as in thin air and had never been heard from since. No one knew whether she had been murdered or what had happened but the mysterious thing was that she had left all of her belongings just as though she were going to the store. And most important of all she had left fifty thousand dollars in the bank.

Betty twitched nervously as she thought of the baffling mystery.

Strange thoughts passed through her young mind as she sat cross-legged on the lounge waiting for her father's return home.

"I'd like a chance to solve that mystery," she said aloud, "but I suppose I'll never get that chance."

Betty's eyes were glued on the pages of the open schoolbook, but her mind was wandering along other lines. Now the wind was howling more loudly and the rat-a-tat of rain on the roof told her that the storm that had been threatening was here.

Almost as though the rain had been in a hurry to start it beat down on the front porch and against the windows harder and harder.

Betty tossed the book aside and started for the kitchen just as she heard sounds on the steps outside.

She uttered a sigh of relief as she ran to the front door—but she stopped short ten feet away when the shrill sound of the doorbell told her that it was not her father.

Betty paused. Then she walked quietly to the window and looked out. The darkness that had come with the storm made it hard for her to see.

“Who could this visitor be?” she wondered. “We weren’t expecting anyone and certainly father never forgets his key.”

Again came the sharp, shrill ring of the doorbell. Whoever it was was impatient.

Betty thought a moment, then smiled to herself, and, gathering her courage, unlocked the door.

Standing before her was the strangest looking person she had ever seen. It was an old woman with deep sunken eyes set in a weather beaten, bronzed face. Certainly she had no business here. She was dressed in tatters of what had once been brightly colored silk. Large cheap jewels hung from her ears and a dirty head dress came down over her forehead. Betty knew that she had never seen such a queer person before.

“What is it?” Betty inquired weakly.

“I would like to come in and dry myself by your fire,” the old woman smiled through stained teeth, “and if you will give me a cup of tea I will save the leaves and read your fortune. Perhaps I will have a message for you.”

“Oh,” gasped Betty, “a real gypsy.”

“Yes, my child,” the ragged old woman said as she entered, “I’m a gypsy but I mean you no harm. I’m a tired old woman without the comforts my age deserves. Perhaps Fate has sent me here tonight.”

Betty thought a moment. After all what harm could this old woman do anyone?

“I’ll be old some day myself and want people to be kind to me,” Betty reasoned.

“Do come in,” she said politely. “Sit down here by the fire and I’ll make us some tea.”

As Betty collected the tea things she wondered if it was safe to leave a gypsy in the living room alone. She had heard a lot about their stealing things.

“If she does take anything I’ll be roundly scolded by Dad,” she thought.

Betty opened a swinging door so that she could keep one eye on the old woman and felt more at ease. But the gypsy only bent over nearer the fire and rubbed her wrinkled hands together slowly, holding

her palms up to the warming blaze and Betty knew that for the present at least everything was all right.

Betty sat the tea tray on the table and handed her visitor a cup.

"Will you have lemon or cream?" she asked.

The aged woman made no reply so Betty decided she preferred it plain. She served herself and rested back in her chair.

This was to be the most unusual tea of her experience indeed.

Her visitor made no attempt to engage her in conversation but sat staring into the open fireplace and sipping her brew loudly and looking about her nervously from time to time.

Outside the rain was pouring down harder than ever. Betty was becoming uneasy when the gypsy looked over at her through deep sunken eyes and announced: "Now I will read the leaves."

Betty was both anxious and amused.

The old woman stared into the cup. Her eyes took on a glisten not unlike the sparkling fire before them.

"I see big adventures," she began, "and I see danger," she frowned.

This was followed by a silence.

"I see many friends, and many enemies," she continued, "the enemies mean to do you harm. Be very careful during the next few weeks or they will succeed."

The old gypsy's eyes turned from the cup. The sparkle was gone as she announced:

"That is all, but heed my warning and be careful."

Betty smiled inwardly, for she did not have much confidence in that sort of thing.

"Thank you," she said, "I'll be careful."

The woman stood up and looked towards the door.

"I must go now," she announced.

Betty jumped up, "But you can't go out in this downpour. Why it's raining harder than it was when you came in."

The gypsy patted Betty on the shoulder gently.

"The wet won't hurt me. It's you who must be careful."

"Then let me lend you some covering," Betty offered.

"I'll be all right," the old woman said as she neared the door.

"Thank you for telling my fortune," Betty was saying as she reached for the doorknob.

A creak on the porch outside caused them to look at each other anxiously.

But Betty smiled and opened the door.

Standing before them was a gypsy man of huge stature. His hands rested on his hips, his legs wide apart. An angry surly look curled his lips into a snarl.

"So you came here anyway," he snapped as he grabbed the old



woman by the shoulder and threw her out onto the porch.

Betty advanced to the porch.

"Stop that," she demanded, "you can't do that to an old woman."

"I can't eh? Well, just watch me," the man shouted.

Then he took a long step forward and gave the woman a push that sent her sprawling down the steps into a puddle formed by the rain.

Betty made a move but before she could say a word the man turned on her.

"And you'll do well to mind your own business, miss," he snarled. "I warned her about coming here."

Betty was startled. What could this all mean? What had the old woman done to cause the man to follow her and treat her so roughly?

As she stood there in silence the man retreated to the steps, bent over and grabbed the woman by the shoulder and pulled her to her feet.

"Come along," he muttered, "I'll teach you to disobey me."

Betty watched them disappear into the night and then turned and went into the house, closing the door behind her.

"This is indeed baffling," she said to herself, "I wonder what can be back of it all."

**B**ACK in the house Betty tried to make herself comfortable on the lounge but her efforts were in vain.

It was now nine o'clock and the rain was easing up a bit but the girl's nervousness increased.

She picked up the tray containing the tea cups and walked slowly to the kitchen.

"Father has never left me alone like this before," she said to herself. "I'm getting worried. What if something has happened to him?"

She shuddered at the thought.

A moment later she heard heavy footsteps on the porch and heard a key enter the door.

She rushed to meet Martin Baker.

"Daddy," she said excitedly as she threw her arms about his neck, "I'm so glad you're here at last."

The tall well-built man slipped off his topcoat and handed it to his daughter.

"I'm sorry I was late, Betty," he started as he strode over by the fire, "but a lot of things came up that I hadn't expected and it was later than I thought."

Betty hung the wet coat up and returned to her father's side.

"I was awfully worried, father," she began. "A lot of strange things happened here tonight."

Martin Baker turned away from the fire.

"Tell me about them, Betty," he asked.

Betty recounted the events of the last hour slowly and calmly while her father listened intently.

"Are you sure the gypsies went away?" he asked when she had finished.

"Yes," Betty assured him, "but that ruffian sure frightened me." Judge Baker frowned.

"I found out about them on my way home," he followed, "they're camped over near the old Reynolds' estate. Moved in just this afternoon. It's rather a surprise to everybody considering we haven't had any gypsies around here for five years. And the puzzling thing about them is that they pitched camp on the Reynolds' grounds where they can't be moved. Since Laura Reynolds' disappearance no one has any authority to handle the property."

"Wasn't it the Reynolds case that took you to town today, Dad?" she asked.

"Yes, it was," her father answered, "it's all rather mysterious, these events all piling up together, all rather puzzling."

Judge Baker forced a smile.

"But don't you worry, Betty," he laughed. "We'll get those gypsies out of the neighborhood in double-quick time and I won't leave you here alone anymore."

Betty rested easily for the first time that night.

"What did you find out about the Reynolds mystery?" she asked.

Judge Baker knew that Betty had always possessed a keen interest in all of the cases he handled and he had always made it a point to tell her about them.

"Rather an interesting development," he answered, "you know we have all thought that she is still alive, yet we couldn't explain her running away and leaving all that money in the bank."

The judge took a cigar from his pocket, lit it, and puffed deeply.

"Well, the authorities got a letter today saying that Laura Reynolds is alive and well."

Betty leaned forward.

"Whew," she ejaculated, "that is news. Did the note say anything else?"

"Nothing except that the authorities would hear more later," Judge Baker finished.

As the last words left Judge Baker's lips the roar of a motor coming to an abrupt stop in the drive outside was heard.

"Who can that be?" he asked, looking at Betty.

Betty did not reply but instead walked to the door with her father. Before the doorbell could ring the judge opened the door.

"Why, hello, Walter," he shouted out to Walter Carter a neighbor

who was getting out of his car, "what brings you over here on a night like this?"

The man hurried up the stairs without saying a word. He was obviously worried, for his face wore a deep furrowed frown.

"Come on inside, Judge," he said softly, "I've got something I want to talk to you about."

Once inside he apologized for the hurried visit and settled down to talk.

Betty knew Walter Carter well for he was the father of the darlingest twin boys she had ever seen. She greeted him cordially and then went to make some coffee.

"I'm worried, Judge," the man began, "I got a mysterious letter just a few minutes ago that might cause a lot of trouble."

Judge Baker was interested.

"Let's see the letter, Walter," he suggested.

Walter Carter drew a white sheet from his inside pocket and handed it to the judge.

"My wife found it in our mailbox less than an hour ago," he said, "it must have been delivered during that heavy rain. When my wife read it she fainted."

Judge Baker read the words aloud.

"Five years ago Laura Reynolds disappeared and was never heard from again because she failed to comply with our wishes. Tonight we are asking you to secure ten thousand dollars in unmarked bills and have them ready when you next hear from us. If you do not carry out our instructions and remain silent one of your children will meet the same fate as Laura Reynolds did. Remember, tell no one."

There was no signature.

Betty had returned from the kitchen just in time to hear the last words of the note.

"No one must know about this, Betty," Mr. Carter stated. "It's a serious situation."

Judge Baker smiled.

"Betty won't say anything," he assured Carter, "she's a born detective. Keeps her eyes open and her mouth shut, don't you, Betty?"

"If that's the way to help, that's what I want to do," Betty told the men.

"What do you make of it, Judge?" Walter Carter asked.

Judge Baker shook his head.

"It's all very odd," he answered. And then he went on to tell of his call to town on the Reynolds case and of Betty's experience in the house that night.

"I hadn't heard about the gypsies," the man said, "but I'll bet they're tied up with this in some way."

A cold chill ran up and down Betty's spine as she listened.

"Don't say a word to anyone else," Judge Baker commanded, "I'll go over to the gypsy camp myself the first thing in the morning and find out what this is all about. But something tells me that they haven't got a thing to do with it. Gypsies know what bad reputations they have these days and they're pretty careful."

"Just the same it all can't be coincidence, Judge," the neighbor surmised.

"That sounds right too," the judge had to admit.

"If they harm my children I don't know what I'll do," Carter said as he got up and started to go.

As he stood up Betty screamed.

"The face at the window," she exclaimed, "there was a man at the big window."

Judge Baker and Walter Carter rushed for the door.

In a flash they were outside on the porch—but there was no sound of life. The car was still standing in the driveway. The rain had stopped completely and an eerie silence enveloped the grounds as the two men stood still for a moment looking all about them.

"Are you sure you saw a face at the window?" her father asked Betty.

"Yes, I'm positive," Betty replied excitedly, "and it *wasn't* the face of a gypsy. I'm sure of that."

## CHAPTER II

### The Gypsy Camp

**A**LTHOUGH Judge Baker and Walter Carter searched the grounds thoroughly they could find no trace of the mysterious visitor.

"I'll look into all this the first thing in the morning," the judge told Carter, "and I'll get in touch with you."

"I appreciate this a lot," the neighbor said, "you never can tell what will happen when threats start."

Walter Carter waved goodbye as his car disappeared into the main road.

"And now it's time for you to be in bed, young lady," Judge Baker told his wideawake daughter. "Are you going to be frightened?"

Betty laughed.

"Not at all, Dad. Why, with you here nothing could possibly happen."

"And if I wasn't here?" he questioned.

Betty's eyes took on a warm glow.

"Why, I'd act just like you do, and everything would be all right," she smiled.

The following morning Betty was up bright and early preparing her father's breakfast.

When he had finished he kissed her goodbye.

"Aunt Martha should be here any minute now so I'll take a run over to that gypsy camp and see what I can learn."

"I'll be safe and sound," Betty assured her father as she waved to him.

Back in the kitchen Betty was arranging the dishes neatly in the sink when the doorbell rang.

She turned quickly.

"Who could that be?" she asked herself.

Then she took off the little apron she had been wearing and started for the door.

"I hope it's not one of those gypsies who has been watching the house for father to leave," she thought to herself.

As she approached the door a thought came to her.

"I'll play safe and look out the window."

When she drew back the curtains she smiled happily for there standing before the door was Mary Nichols holding her twin boys in her arms.

She threw the door open.

"Why, Mary Nichols," she exclaimed, "what a pleasant surprise. How are the babies?"

"Never been better, Betty," the young woman answered with a smile, "they just had to see you," she finished as she entered.

Betty reached out and took one of them in her arms while Mary settled herself on the lounge still holding the other.

"Why, they're cuter than ever," Betty exclaimed, "and how they have grown."

"Yes, the doctor says they're the healthiest children he has ever seen."

Betty placed the one down gently and lifted the other high over her head while the mother watched proudly.

"I'm so glad you came, Mary. I've been wanting to see you and the boys for days. Since father and I moved out here on the edge of the woods it seems I don't get to see anyone anymore."

"We've missed you too, Betty. How have you been?"

"Everything's fine, Mary." Then Betty stopped short, "That is, we think everything is fine."

"What do you mean?" questioned the mother.

"There's been some mysterious doings around here," she began, "a band of gypsies are encamped at the old Reynolds estate and one of them came here last night."

"Goodness," exclaimed Mary.

"Oh, I don't want to frighten you, Mary," the girl said remembering that she wasn't to tell anyone about the threat to Walter Carter, "but the thing interests me a lot."

Then Betty told her young friend about the fortune teller and the man who came for her.

"That does sound mysterious," the mother said when Betty had finished. "You must be careful."

"And everybody must be careful too until father gets those ugly people out of the vicinity," Betty warned Mary.

Mary looked at her two healthy boys and sighed.

"What if something should happen to them?"

"Oh, nothing's going to happen to them," Betty laughed. "Why, they'd fight those gypsies right off, wouldn't you?"

The mother smiled weakly.

"Just the same I don't like to have people like that within a hundred miles of me," she added.

Betty wanted to change the subject, half sorry that she had mentioned the gypsies at all.

"I'm expecting Aunt Martha back any minute," she ventured, "then I'd like to take you and the babies for a ride. How would that be?"

Mary Nichols' face lighted up and she was herself again.

"We'd love that, wouldn't we, boys?" she answered.

Aunt Martha came in a few minutes later and Betty and Mary lost no time in getting going.

"It's such a gorgeous day," Betty said, "the morning sun will do us all a lot of good."

Mary tucked the boys in the seat beside her and cuddled them close as Betty stepped on the starter.

Meanwhile Judge Baker was making his way to the old Reynolds estate where the gypsies were encamped.

As he approached the camp he saw half a dozen tents pitched some two hundred yards to the right of the old mansion in what had once been an open pasture.

The olive skinned men and women were sitting around lazily until they saw him approach. Then one old woman shuffled towards him.

"Can I tell your fortune, mister?" she begged.

Judge Baker smiled at the aged old woman and patted her on the shoulder for he had learned to be nice even to those who seemed not to deserve it.

"No," he answered, "I would like to speak to your leader."

As Judge Baker spoke he saw a giant of a man approaching. His face wore a serious expression that could have easily been taken for a frown.

"I'm the leader," he announced. "What is it you want?"

"I want to speak with you," the judge said. "I am Judge Baker."

"I know who you are," the man answered. "What is it you want?"

The Judge looked about him at the faces of the gypsy band. They were looking at him with an air of defiance.

The leader continued.

It is all right to talk here," he said "I have no secrets from my people."

Judge Baker began.

"I want to know what you are doing here and how long you intend to stay?"

The bronzed man smiled sardonically.

"We are going to camp here for a few weeks, perhaps longer," he answered with an air of finality, "we hope to entertain and tell fortunes so that we can collect a little money and move on southward for the winter."

"Do you know that it is against the law to trespass on private property?" the judge asked.

"We have had no complaints," the gypsy replied coldly. "Until we do we shall remain here."

The Judge wondered just how much these people knew about the Reynolds estate.

"Was it you who came to my house last night?" he asked.

The gypsy raised his face defiantly.

"Yes," he answered, "I came for my wife. She went there against my orders."

The Judge was puzzled. Here was a man who was obviously more intelligent than he had expected to find. It was hard to determine whether he was telling the truth or lying—whether he was friend or foe.

"Then you intend to mind your business while you are here?" the Judge asked.

"Gypsies always mind their own business," the man snapped quickly. "And gypsies expect others to mind their own business," he finished.

The Judge rubbed his chin with his open hand.

"There have been some strange things taking place around here since you moved in yesterday afternoon," he said, "and people have a way of suspicioning gypsies who come and go at will."

"That has nothing to do with us," the man answered.

"Nevertheless, I'd advise you to keep away from people's homes and be careful of your actions. If anything happens it will go hard with you. I'll tell you that five years ago a woman disappeared from this vicinity while a gypsy band was encamped here. She has never been heard from since. The people resent gypsies. They think that the gypsy band had something to do with the woman's disappearance. And they will not tolerate the least suspicious move. I think you ought to know that."

The muscular man smiled knowingly.

"We are wise in the ways of the world," he answered, "we mind our own business."

The Judge turned and started to go.

"I hope I won't have to make another visit here," he said.

The strange bronzed figure folded his arms and his lips curled into an enigmatic smile, but he said nothing.

Judge Baker turned and walked away, puzzled.

**M**MARTIN BAKER went straight to the offices of Walter Carter.

"It's got me puzzled," the Judge began. "I had a talk with the head of the gypsy band and he seems all right. Anyway we can't make



them move off those grounds until they do something we can pin on them."

Walter Carter had not slept much the night before. He was worried and the lines beneath his tired eyes were proof of it.

"It's all so strange," he said as he paced the floor. "Five years ago Laura Reynolds vanished in thin air—but we couldn't find a trace of her in the gypsy camp. Now they move in again and I get a threat. I don't know what to do about it. I feel so helpless."

"Did you get the ten thousand out of the bank?" the Judge asked.

"Yes, I did that the first thing this morning. They questioned me at the bank but I told them nothing. It's there in my safe."

Judge Baker shook his head.

"There's nothing to do but wait," he said finally.

Betty Baker and Mary Nichols sped along the beautiful country road bathed in the morning sunlight.

For some reason unknown to herself Betty had taken the road that leads to the Reynolds place. As they passed the old mansion they could see the smoke from the gypsies' fire but the heavy trees hid the house and camp from view.

"Let's drop in and say hello to Ruth Stone," Betty suggested.

"I haven't seen her for ages," Mary enthused, "that would be fun."

Ruth Stone lived in the large house several hundred yards from the Reynolds estate. She was a young married woman about the age of Mary, and Betty had known her for some time.

Betty guided the car to a stop in front of the red brick building and tooted her horn loudly.

There was not a sound from within the house.

"There doesn't seem to be anybody at home," Mary said as Betty gave the horn another push.

"That's strange," Betty answered, as she got out of the car, "Ruth hardly ever gets into town and I've never known her to leave the house without someone here."

Betty got back in the car and was about to back out of the driveway when she spied Ruth's car coming up the road.

"Hello there," Ruth shouted. "Don't you dare run away."

Betty pulled back into position and Ruth's car came to a stop directly behind her.

"Am I glad you came," Ruth exclaimed. "I've been wanting to talk with you ever since yesterday."

When they were all in the house Betty asked Ruth what she meant.

"Oh," the girl started, "I've had the weirdest feeling lately. You know how peaceful and quiet it usually is here. Well, on two nights now my husband and I have been sure we heard a woman screaming."

Betty looked at Mary Nichols.

"Tell me about it," she said bending nearer. "Where did the sound come from?"

Ruth laughed.

"I suppose it's all our foolish imagination," she added, "but it seemed to come from the old Reynolds estate."

"But there hasn't been anyone living there for five years," Mary put in.

"That's the thing that puzzles us," Ruth went on, "I've never said anything about it but my husband and I have had a lot of suspicions about that old place. On several occasions we've thought we heard sounds coming from there in the dead of night."

"You know about the gypsies camped there?" Betty asked.

"Yes, we know all about them," Ruth answered. "But they moved in yesterday and we thought we heard one of the screams night before last—before the gypsies moved in."

Mary shook her head as she looked at her twin boys.

"I don't know what to make of it," Betty went on, "but one thing's sure we haven't had anything like this since Laura Reynolds disappeared five years ago."

"What does your husband think of it?" Mary asked.

Ruth shrugged her shoulders.

"He's just as puzzled as I am," she answered, "we've even talked of moving to town if this keeps up."

"Did you know Laura Reynolds?" Betty asked Ruth.

"Oh, very well," she answered. "Laura was a dear."

Betty's expression had taken on a serious aspect, but now she smiled.

"We'll get to the bottom of this," she announced, "even if I have to turn detective and solve it myself."

"I'll bet you could solve it, too," Ruth exclaimed, "and you'd be the envy of the community. And if you could find out what happened to Laura Reynolds you'd be a real hero—everybody loved her, you know."

"We'll have to run along now, Ruth," she said. "Mary here will have to get the babies fed. I'll let you know if I hear anything, and if you hear any more screams let me know."

Ruth promised that she would and soon Betty and Mary were speeding along the road again.

As they passed in front of the Reynolds' mansion they both looked up in silence—for there was nothing for either of them to say.

Betty dropped Mary and the babies off at their home in the little town and then pointed her car homeward.

As she turned a corner she became aware of a car behind her that had apparently been following her.

Instinctively she slowed down. The car in the rear followed suit.

"I wonder who they can be?" she asked herself for she could see the faces of two men in the car behind her, and she did not recognize either of them. "Certainly they are strangers for I know everyone around here."

Betty was not sure whether to stop and let them go by or to keep on going home. Finally she decided to slow down and stop at the corner drugstore to buy a magazine.

"That will give me a chance to get a good look at them," she reasoned.

Betty pulled up short at the corner and took the pursuing car by surprise.

She saw the man at the wheel frown, start to stop and then continue.

As the car passed Betty got a good look at the two men, and she knew that they were not natives of the community for their hard faces were sheltered by gray hats pulled down over their eyes, and they talked out of the corners of their mouths attempting to make conversation as they passed.

"Who could they be?" Betty asked herself. "I *know* I never saw them before."

A few quick steps took her into the store where she was greeted by the proprietor who was an old friend.

"Hello, Betty," he exclaimed, "I don't see as much of you as I used to."

"No," she said smilingly, "I don't get in as often as I'd like to."

After purchasing a magazine she walked slowly out of the store.

To her utter surprise she came face to face with one of the two mysterious men who had followed her. He leered at her as she hurried to her car.

"This is getting exciting," she mused. "It's a good thing I've got my car."

As she stepped on the starter she watched the man get back in the car.

"I guess I'm a little apprehensive," she laughed as she sped away. "But just the same I'm going to keep my eyes open."

The distance that separated the little city from her suburban home was not long and it was widely traveled, so she had no fears of anything happening in broad daylight.

"When I come to my driveway," she thought to herself, "I'll slow down and see if they're following me."

Betty stepped on the gas and moved swiftly homeward.

As she neared the driveway she slowed down and coasted.

Sure enough in a few minutes the big car zoomed up on the hill

and before it could slow down had sped past the driveway.

Betty got a good look at the men again. Then she moved up in front of her house.

She was thinking deeply now, trying to recall something.

"I've got it," she finally exclaimed. "The face at the window last night. That's it. The man sitting beside the driver—I'm sure of it."

Betty mounted the stairs slowly.

"Those men are out for no good," she thought to herself. "I wonder what they're doing following me?"

Betty opened the front door.

"Now I've really got something to tell Dad," she breathed uneasily.

## CHAPTER III

### Screams at Midnight

**J**UDGE BAKER was just sitting down to lunch when Betty rushed in and told him what had happened.

"I don't know what we can do about it," her father told her, "except be on our guard every minute. You see, no one has actually done anything yet."

Betty enjoyed her lunch in spite of her high excitement and when it was over she and her father sat down to read the afternoon papers.

"What about the church picnic that's scheduled for tomorrow?" the judge asked his daughter. "Isn't it to be held at Big Mouth Cave just back of the Reynolds' estate?"

Betty was silent for a moment. Every year she had looked forward to this outing but now things had taken a different turn.

"Yes, that's where we always have it," she answered, "but there couldn't possibly be any danger with so many people around."

"Just the same, Betty, I want you to be particularly careful," her father warned. "You never can tell what some unprincipled people might try to do."

"You can be sure, I'll take no chances," Betty said as she smiled inwardly at the excitement.

Nothing more happened that afternoon or night and dawn broke the next morning and spread a blanket of warmth over the countryside.

"What a glorious day for an outing," Betty enthused.

After a hurried breakfast she picked up the full lunch basket which Aunt Martha had prepared for her and kissing her father goodbye dashed into her car and was off to the picnic grounds.

But first she had to pick up Mary Nichols and her babies.

Betty tooted her horn in front of the Nichols home and Mary came to the window and waved.

"I'll be right out," she assured Betty, and almost immediately the door opened and Mary and the babies were in the car.

"This is all so thrilling," Mary began, "a picnic right in the midst of mysterious happenings. Whew, it gives me the chills."

"Don't think about mysteries today, Mary," Betty answered. "We're out for a good time."

"But how can I help it, Betty," Mary protested. "What with the picnic almost on the Reynolds' grounds and the gypsies camped within a short distance. That's really too close for comfort."

Betty did not reply, for she too knew that these particular grounds would not have been chosen had it been known that the gypsies were coming.

In a short while they pulled into the narrow lane that led to Big Mouth Cave. This cave was one of the largest of many small underground passages that honeycombed the community. There were at least a dozen well known caves and numerous other small ones that no one paid much attention to. These caves had played a major role in the hunt for Laura Reynolds after her mysterious disappearance. The authorities had searched every nook and corner of them but they found no trace of the ill-fated woman.

The large opening of the cave was a bee-hive of activity when Betty pulled up in front and parked her car.

Mothers were busy arranging the tables in preparation for the lunch and dozens of children ran hither and yon laughing gleefully. Exploring parties with searchlights were already preparing to inspect the dark passageways of the underground tunnel.

One of the first people Betty saw was Ruth Stone.

"Betty," Ruth shouted, "I've got something to tell you."

She took Betty aside and whispered softly.

"We heard those same screams last night," she began, "it was the most weird wailing."

"Sh!" Betty said when Mary had finished, "don't spoil the outing for the others."

"I haven't said a word to anyone," Ruth told her, "but my husband went in to town this morning to talk with Sheriff West about it."

Betty said nothing but inwardly she decided to do some investigating on her own. This fantastic situation was beginning to arouse her curiosity and she was determined to unearth some clue to the mystery.

Almost every woman in town was in attendance. But there was one family unrepresented—the Walter Carter family.

"Evidently Mrs. Carter wouldn't take a chance on bringing her twins out," Betty thought to herself when someone told her that the mother had been taken ill suddenly and would be unable to attend.

By now the place was alive with excitement. Boys and girls were busy with their games and the mothers were busy setting the table or guiding exploring parties into the secret caverns of the cave.

Betty helped the older women for an hour or so and then they would have no more of it.

"You have done more than your share already, Betty," one of the women told her jovially, "you've got some fun coming too."

Betty laughed and went over to sit down beside Ruth Stone.

"You know, Ruth," she began, "I'm going to do some exploring. I believe the secret of these strange happenings is hidden right in these woods and I believe that I can solve it if I put my mind to it."

Ruth frowned.

"But Betty," she gasped, "please don't take any chances. Remember what happened to Laura Reynolds."

"I'll remember all right," Betty said as she got up and started off in the direction of the cave.

She paused in front of the huge opening for a moment while she turned over the events of the past few days in her mind.

"There is the Reynolds home right in the center of this cave region," she reasoned, "and the gypsy camp, and the strange men who followed me. What can the secret be?"

Then Betty walked slowly to the left of the cave and took a narrow path leading through thick underbrush that led in the direction of the deserted Reynolds mansion. She walked slowly and cautiously, keeping her eyes moving to either side to be sure that no one was creeping up behind her.

"I'm really taking an awful chance," she told herself, "but I can't resist the temptation to try to solve this mystery."

Five minutes later she stood in the opening that was the back yard of the Reynolds home. Once the lawns had been smooth and velvety green. But now their unkempt appearance gave a grotesque setting. Tall weeds and brown bushes told of the absence of a woman's care and the deserted house itself was ghostlike in its appearance even by day.

Betty hesitated a moment, then moved forward.

"I wonder if I can get in?" she asked herself without even thinking about the danger that might lurk inside.

She tried the rear door, but it was locked.

Then she eased around to the side of the house nearest the gypsy camp. The black smoke from their fires circled heavenward.

Betty tried a window but it only creaked without giving way.

She continued around to the front.

Five years of neglect had taken its toll in the Reynolds home. The steps that had once welcomed the best people of the community were sunken and rotted and weeds and dandelions had made their way through the large cracks in the porch floor.

"What a shame," Betty thought to herself. "This must have been the prettiest house around here at one time."

When she reached the door she turned the knob carefully and pushed in gently, fully expecting to find it locked.

But to her amazement the door moved in easily.

The death-like silence that greeted her inside was ghostly enough to cause her to shudder.

"Dad wouldn't approve of this," she thought to herself, "but I've always wanted to get a look at this place and now that I believe it holds the secret of a thrilling mystery I can't resist investigating."

Dust had gathered on the furniture and pictures and a strange atmosphere reigned in the room.

"It is as though something had been started and never finished," Betty told herself.

After studying the large living room carefully Betty went through to the dining room and then to the kitchen that faced the back yard. Huge cobwebs obstructed the view from the windows and a dank, murky air hung heavy in the rooms.

There was one large bedroom downstairs and several smaller rooms which had evidently been occupied by the servants.

"I wonder if anyone will ever solve this mystery," she asked herself as she stood at the foot of the stairs wondering whether or not she dare mount the steps to the second floor.

Almost without thinking she started up slowly, one step at a time.

The stair railing was covered with dust of the years and the stairs creaked beneath her unsteadily.

It must have taken her five minutes to reach the top but this was one time she was taking things slowly.

Cautiously she entered a large room at the right of the staircase. It had been a master bedroom and the old-fashioned four poster bed looked inviting except for the dust that covered its once-fine spread.

"What a strange story," Betty thought to herself, "that a woman should disappear completely and leave a beautiful home like this to go to ruin."

She was about to leave the room when she caught her breath and stopped short.

"Could that be voices?"

Every muscle in her body was taut as she remained motionless, straining every nerve to hear any sound.

The blood seemed to drain from her veins as she heard masculine voices coming from the floor beneath.

She grasped the bedpost and stared nervously into space as she heard heavy footsteps on the stairs.

**T**HE next few seconds seemed like centuries to Betty.

The voices grew nearer.

Betty's frail body trembled.

Then a sigh of relief oozed from the girl's lips as she saw two men standing in the doorway, as surprised as she.



"Why, Sheriff West and Bob Stone, you almost frightened me to death," she said in an exhausted tone.

The two men could not understand the girl's presence in the house.

"What in the world are you doing in this place, Betty?" the Sheriff asked.

"Haven't you heard about the strange happenings here?" broke in Bob Stone.

Betty smiled with relief.

"Yes, that's why I'm here," she answered. "I couldn't resist the temptation to look the place over, but I didn't expect to find anyone here."

The Sheriff had to chuckle.

"A true daughter of Martin Baker," he said. "A few years ago you couldn't have kept him away from this place, either."

But Bob Stone did not seem to agree.

"After all, Betty," he added, "this is no place for a girl of your age."

"I'm afraid you're right, Bob," she answered, "but Ruth told me about the sounds you heard coming from here and I was attending the picnic, so I just walked over to look into things for myself."

The men could not help admiring the girl's courage.

"Well," the Sheriff said good-naturedly, "have you uncovered any clues?"

Betty smiled back.

"No, I'll have to admit that I haven't found anything yet," she said.

"Neither have we," put in Bob Stone, "but I'm sure there's something unnatural going on here at night."

"Let's have a look around," the Sheriff said, motioning to Betty, "and as long as you're here maybe you can help us, Betty."

Betty smiled at the compliment.

"I hope I can," she answered.

The party of three inspected each room carefully, but there was no sign of anything having been disturbed lately.

When they had finished the upper floor they descended the stairs.

"Let's give the downstairs a thorough going over," Bob Stone suggested. "I'm sure Ruth and I aren't hearing things that don't exist."

Betty followed the two men closely until they reached the kitchen; then she wandered into the large bedroom off from it.

"Nothing here," she heard the Sheriff laugh. "Looks like a blind lead, Bob," he finished as he prepared to leave.

In the bedroom Betty was bending over inspecting a small wad of paper she had found in a corner.

"Come in here a minute, Sheriff," she called. "I think I've found something."

As the two men hurried into the room Betty straightened out a

small piece of white paper with red printing on it.

The two men looked at her and smiled.

"That's nothing but a chewing gum wrapper," Bob Stone put in.

"Yes, Betty, what's unusual about that. They've been making Tasty Gum for years."

Betty was serious.

"Yes," she told them, "but they haven't been wrapping it in small individual sticks long," she told the men. "They only started doing that about six months ago. They used to wrap it in one long piece altogether different than the usual way of wrapping five individual sticks."

Sheriff West looked at Bob Stone and rubbed his chin.

"I'm afraid we've got a real detective with us, Bob," he said. "Betty's right. My oldest boy entered a contest put on by the Tasty Gum people when they were trying to decide whether or not to make the change. It was about six months ago."

"But what does that prove?" Stone asked.

Betty Baker answered him.

"It proves that there has been someone in this house within the last six months."

The Sheriff smiled.

"Most likely it doesn't mean a thing," he added, "but just the same Betty's stumbled onto more than we have; and now I'm going to give this place a real going over. As far as I knew, no one had entered this house in the last twelve months."

Bob Stone was beginning to realize the possible importance of the little wrapper which Betty had uncovered.

"Then Ruth and I weren't hearing things?" he asked.

"It begins to look like you were hearing real things," the Sheriff told him.

Betty had turned the wrapper over to the officer and now she followed them around the room.

The Sheriff tapped the walls and floors with his cane.

"This house is so old and so little is known about it that there might be a hidden door or secret passage that no one but the Reynoldses knew about," he remarked.

Betty had remained silent, but inside she was all aflutter. Her first taste of detective work had whetted her appetite.

"One thing that has always baffled me about this part of the country," the Sheriff said, "is the large number of caves around here. If a kidnapper knew the vicinity and happened to stumble onto a secret entrance or exit he could remain in hiding a long time."

Although the searching party retraced their footsteps to every nook and corner of the old mansion, they were unable to find anything else that even faintly resembled a clue.

"What about a basement?" Betty asked.

"As far as anyone knew," the Sheriff told her, "there was never a basement here. It was rather strange because most people had them in these old places; but the Reynoldses always used a small cave in the rear that only runs fifty feet or so into the ground for their cellar and ice house."

"Let's take a look at it," Bob Stone suggested.

Betty followed the two men out of the front door.

As they turned the corner the Sheriff caught sight of the gypsy camp fire smoke.

"I wish there was some way of moving those people on," he said with a sigh of resignation. "I don't like to have them anywhere around here."

The small cave in the back was just as the Sheriff had described it. It was about twelve feet wide and fifty feet long. The floor was moist and the air cool and damp.

Rusted kettles and pots hung from the walls, but aside from that it was bare.

Sheriff West poked the walls with his cane and walked back to the rear.

"Just a blind alley," he announced.

Betty watched the officer close the door behind them and stand with his hands on his hips, looking blankly at the ground.

She was about to speak when she heard the sound of someone rushing through the underbrush along the path that she had taken from the cave.

The three looked up startled, waiting for the person to come in full view.

The sight that greeted them was enough to announce some real tragedy—for it was Ruth Stone, wide-eyed, and out of breath from running.

Before anyone could say a word she was in front of them.

"Sheriff West, come at once," she panted. "The Nichols twins are missing. Something dreadful has happened."

Bob Stone took his frightened wife in his arms.

"I took a chance on your being here," she continued. "I knew Bob was going to talk to you about this place and I thought maybe you'd make a trip here. Do hurry. Mary is almost frantic."

Sheriff West made a dash for the path. Bob and Ruth Stone followed close behind.

Betty stood motionless for a moment, unable to think or speak.

"Those darling babies," she said to herself finally. "Now I know something's wrong around here and I'm going to find out what it is."

In a few quick leaps she was directly behind Bob and Ruth Stone.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Mistake Discovered

SHERIFF WEST found Mary Nichols with her face buried in her hands, crying. Mothers were huddling their children close to them; some were preparing to leave, others aiding in the frantic search for the missing twins.

"Tell me what happened, Mary," the Sheriff spoke as he approached.

"Oh, it's terrible," the young mother answered. "It's just as though the earth had swallowed them up."

Betty was standing beside Mary, her comforting arm around the woman's shoulder.

"I was sitting over by that tree," she said, pointing to a huge oak near the side of the cave, "and I came over to the table to get a sandwich. When I returned, they were gone."

Mary Nichols could say no more. She stopped short, sobbing impulsively.

"Don't worry, Mary," the Sheriff told her. "They can't be far. And I'll get right to work."

The Sheriff walked over to the tree beneath which Mary had been sitting. There was a natural seat formed by the tree roots.

"What do you make of it?" Bob Stone asked.

"It's got me guessing," the Sheriff admitted after looking over the ground carefully. "The kidnapers must have been hiding behind that mound there," he added, indicating a rise in the ground directly back of the tree next to the cave.

"We'd better organize a searching party at once."

The two men retraced their steps to the mouth of the cave and called all of the older boys and girls together.

"I want you to set out in parties of six," he told them, "and search every inch of ground around here."

Sheriff West proceeded to detail the different groups in various directions until he was sure that no section of the grounds would go unsearched.

"You go to the left side, Bob," he told the young man, "and I'll go to the right. If you find anything, let out a yell."

But search as they would there was no trace of the missing babies to be found.

Betty had remained beside her grief-stricken friend for a while, but now she walked over to the tree and studied the ground carefully.

"To think that they would make such a mistake and take the Nichols twins instead of the Carter twins," she murmured. "They haven't a chance of getting a penny out of poor Mary."

Betty climbed the mound behind the tree and descended into a small pitlike affair on the other side of it.

"A perfect place for a kidnapper to hide," she thought to herself. "But how in the world would they make their getaway so quickly?"

The mysterious events of the past few days that had been piling up had raised Betty's curiosity to a new high. Now that the evil doings were striking at her closest and dearest friends, she was more sure than ever that she was going to do something about it all.

When the police arrived from town most of the searching parties had reported in without any results.

Sheriff West and Bob Stone were called into conference with the Chief of Police.

"Not a trace of anything," the Sheriff told the anxious Chief. "If I ever saw a mysterious disappearance this is the one."

"We saw one just like it five years ago when Laura Reynolds disappeared," the Chief reminded him.

Satisfied that nothing else could be done but let the men continue the search, Betty persuaded Mary to get in her car.

"Let's go to my home," Betty told her. "Dad'll be able to help us."

Mary made no reply, but tried to stifle the tears.

"I'm going to solve this mystery myself," Betty told her, "and I'll bet when we find the secret of the twins' disappearance we also find out what happened to Laura Reynolds."

Nothing more was said until they were within a short distance of the Baker home.

"Your father will help us, won't he, Betty?" Mary asked.

"He sure will," Betty assured her, "and he's a real detective."

Judge Baker listened intently as Betty unraveled the story of the strange disappearance.

When she had finished he drew deeply on his cigar. The years of experience in courts made him realize the seriousness of the situation, but he tried to comfort Mary as much as possible.

"The odds are," he began, "that Sheriff West will go right over to the gypsy camp and find the babies and be here in no time at all."

But such was not to be the case. Sheriff West did go over to the gypsy camp, but the solution was not to be as easy as Judge Baker might have led one to believe.

The gypsies were all at the camp and their leader was shocked at the news.

He had greeted the officers cordially.

"But we do not kidnap babies," the gypsy leader had told the investigating officers. "Our people have been wrongly accused for years. Now you can search our camp."

And search the officers did—leaving no stone unturned—but there was no trace of the missing babies.

Sheriff West shook his head.

"You people bring bad luck every time you show up around here," he told the leader. "Something bad always happens."

"Give us money and we will bring good fortune," said an old witch-like woman who had elbowed her way up.

The chieftain shoved her aside.

"We mind our own business," he told the officers.

"Be sure that you do or you'll find yourselves in real trouble," Sheriff West told him.

Back at the Baker home Mary Nichols had been taken to a bedroom to lie down. Betty and her father sat talking.

Betty had not told her father about the trip to the Reynolds estate. As they sat talking the shrill sound of the telephone bell caused the judge to dash to the receiver.

"Yes, Walter," Betty heard him saying. "You say you received instructions as to what to do with the ransom money?"

Betty was at her father's side.

"Yes," she mused, "she was sure of it now. They had meant to take the Carter twins and had mistaken Mary for a nurse and kidnapped the wrong twins."

"All right, Walter," her father added. "I'll be in town right away."

Judge Baker put the receiver down and turned to his daughter.

"They think they've kidnapped the Carter twins," he said, "and Walter wants me to come over right away."

Mary had heard the phone ring.

She was downstairs in a moment.

"What is it?" she asked excitedly.

"Walter Carter wants to see me," the Judge answered, half-apologetically. "It seems they were really after his twins."

Mary sat down on the stairs and put her face in her hands.

"I'll have to run over and see just what I can do," he told Betty.

He was just slipping on his overcoat when there was a shrill sound of the door bell ringing.

Betty answered it.

"Telegram for Judge Baker," the boy announced.

Betty signed for it and walked over and handed it to her father.

Mary watched anxiously as the man opened the envelope nervously. His jaw dropped as he finished. Then he read it aloud.

"Sister Margaret critically ill; imperative you come at once."

The judge stood motionless.

"That means you've got to go to Detroit," Betty put in.

"Yes, Betty," he added. "It means I've got to leave at once."

Betty and Mary looked at each other helplessly.

**T**HIS sudden turn of events worried Martin Baker. He knew that he had to go to his sister's bedside, yet he hated to leave Betty in the midst of this tragedy.

Betty sensed the situation and hurried to say:

"I'll be all right, Dad, what with Aunt Martha and Mary here I'll be completely safe."

Mary came forward.

"Yes, Judge Baker, I'll stay here with Betty. Anyway, I feel that she is going to be a bigger help to me in getting back my babies than all of the regular detectives."

Aunt Martha had been instructed to pack the Judge's bag and now it was ready.

"I'll stop by the police station and tell them that you are going to remain here for a few days and to make all calls here," the Judge said, kissing Betty goodbye. "And, Betty, promise me not to take any chances. You know these men are very dangerous and the odds are they will stop at nothing. If anything happens, you know where I keep my pistol—but don't touch it unless you have to."

"I'll be ever so careful," Betty told her father.

"Oh, yes, I'll have to stop by and tell Walter Carter that I've got to make the trip too," the Judge said, looking at his watch. "I'll just have time to make my train."

After telling Mary that he hoped her babies would be returned unharmed, the judge closed the door behind him and was on his way.

Aunt Martha went back to the kitchen, leaving the girls alone.

"I do wish we would hear some word," Mary said at last. "This uncertainty makes me nervous."

Betty paced the floor.

"I wonder what they will do when they discover they've taken the wrong babies?" she said, half to herself.

"You don't think they will harm them, do you?" Mary questioned.

"No, they won't harm them," she assured her friend.

It was near nightfall before anything was heard from the officers. The Chief of Police and Sheriff West arrived about five-thirty after an all-day search of the countryside.

"There's not a single clue," the Chief told Betty and Mary. "I've

never seen anything like it," and even as hardened an officer as he shuddered at the thought.

Mary recounted all of the details of the disappearance again for the men and they thanked her and departed.

"We're sure to have something on it tomorrow," they assured the anxious mother. "They've already sent instructions to Walter Carter, telling him how to deliver the ransom money. Evidently they don't know their own mistake yet."

Walter Carter came over after dinner.

Mary was upstairs and Betty thought that she had had enough to worry about for one day, so she did not disturb the woman.

"I don't know what to do about the money, Betty," Mr. Carter told the girl. "I'd gladly pay it if I thought it would get the Nichols twins back."

"Then you think they wouldn't keep their word?" she asked.

"You never can tell about kidnapers," he added. "But if you think it's worth a try I have the money and the instructions with me."

Betty realized that Walter Carter had put a serious problem before her. Ten thousand dollars was a lot of money—but two lives were worth a lot more.

"Let me see the instructions," she asked.

Walter Carter took the crumpled paper from his inside pocket and handed it to Betty.

She read aloud:

"Drive out Baymore Road alone at ten o'clock tonight until you reach the big elm the other side of the Reynolds place. Walk into the woods one hundred paces until you reach a large stone. Place the money directly on top of this stone and leave immediately. Return to town at once and tell no one. If you do this the babies will be returned to the exact spot from which they disappeared. Go there at nine o'clock in the morning and they will be there."

Betty was at a loss for words.

"I believe it's worth it," she told Walter Carter. "Can I go with you while you deliver the money?"

"I wish you could, Betty," Carter told her, "but as long as we are delivering the money we had better do exactly as they say and they state that I must do it alone."

"That's right," Betty agreed. "I'll remain here."

It was now nine-thirty.

"I haven't any time to lose," Carter told her. "I'll do exactly as they say and maybe we can save the babies."

Betty wished him luck as he left.

"Telephone me when you get back home," she added as he went out of the door.



"All right," Mr. Carter answered, dashing away.

Suddenly Betty felt all alone. Aunt Martha had gone upstairs and Mary was asleep, completely exhausted from the nerve-wrecking day.

"I wonder if I dare follow him," Betty asked herself as she curled up on the lounge.

She had almost decided to do just that when she realized that she would be leaving Mary and Aunt Martha all alone.

"I'll wait until morning," she thought to herself, "and then I'll retrace Mr. Carter's steps and also go over every inch of the Reynolds estate and the cave grounds. I know that I can uncover the secret."

Betty tried to interest herself in a book, but found that impossible. The minutes seemed like hours as she sat turning over the events of the day in her mind.

"I wonder who could have been in the old Reynolds home lately?" she thought. "That gum wrapper proves that someone was there."

At ten-thirty she went to the window and looked out. At ten-forty-five the telephone rang.

"Mr. Carter at last," she sighed. "Now I'll find out whether or not he delivered the money."

But when Betty took up the receiver and said "hello" the voice that greeted her was anything but friendly.

"This is a friend," the voice began in a coarse, gruff tone. "I just want to warn you not to meddle in the Carter case."

Before Betty could answer the voice had stopped and the receiver had been hung up.

Betty stood holding the receiver, dazed.

Then she remembered. She jangled the hook up and down.

"Operator, operator," she was saying. "This is Betty Baker, Judge Baker's daughter. Trace that call. It was from the kidnapers of the twin babies. Hurry, please."

"I'll call you right back," the operator said.

Betty hung up and waited anxiously.

In less than a minute the telephone rang again.

"The call was made from the inside pay station booth at the Granada Theatre," the operator was saying. "Was there anything else?"

Betty thanked her and told her that was all. Then she dashed out of the house and into her car and made for the Granada Theatre.

"It's a good thing the police station is only a few steps away from the theatre," she said as she sped along the dark road. "We might have a chance of catching the person who made that call."

Betty broke all speed records on her way to town. As she pulled up in front of the station the Chief was just leaving.

"Come with me to the Granada Theatre," she shouted. "I just got a telephone call from one of the kidnapers from there."

The two rushed into the theatre.

The second show had already started and the cashier and doorboy had already gone off duty, leaving no one on guard.

The Chief went over to the telephone booth that was located just to the right of the inside foyer.

The manager rushed over.

"Anything I can do for you, Chief?" he asked.

Betty was busy studying the audience.

"Yes," the Chief answered. "We just got a call from one of the kidnapers from here."

Betty stayed on guard while the Chief spoke with the manager.

As the people left she spoke to most of them, for she knew them all.

"Were there any strangers here tonight?" the Chief asked.

"Yes, several," the manager answered. "You know we get a lot of people out for drives who just stop in."

"Did you notice anything queer about any of them?" he was asked.

"Nothing unusual at all," the manager answered, after thinking.

Betty walked up and down the aisles studying the faces of the remaining theatre-goers, but entered the manager's office unrewarded.

"I know everybody out there," she said. "Whoever it was made the call and then went right out. And since there was no one on duty at the door or in the cashier's box no one saw them leave."

The manager smiled.

"You've got quite a detective here," he said to the Chief.

The police officer smiled back, but then his face took on a more serious aspect.

"Yes," he answered, "we've got a good little detective and we're going to need her because this mystery seems to have us all baffled."

## CHAPTER V

### Betty Visits the Reynolds Estate

**N**OTHING more was learned that night and after she had gone over the details of the telephone conversation with the Chief Betty jumped into her car and returned home.

The night was inky black, even the moon seemed to be in hiding. When she reached home Mary and Aunt Martha were up waiting for her.

"Where have you been?" Mary asked half resentfully.

Betty smiled.

"I got a telephone call warning me not to interfere in the case and I went to investigate," she told the anxious couple.

"Well Walter Carter called about eleven and when you didn't answer it the ringing woke us up. He delivered the money all right but he didn't see a soul."

"Then you'll have your babies back in the morning," Betty told Mary.

"That's what Mr. Carter hopes," Mary put in, "wasn't that wonderful of him to pay the money. I don't know how I'll ever repay him."

"Perhaps you won't have to," Betty finished.

The excitement of the day had wearied all three of them so it was no wonder that they rested comfortably that night in spite of their worries.

Betty was up at the crack of dawn.

Mary was downstairs a few minutes later.

"It won't be long now until we have the babies back," Betty told Mary as she prepared the bacon and eggs. "We must follow the instructions to the letter and then we can be sure that we've done our part."

Mary was almost dying with anxiety but she agreed that the only thing to do was to wait until the appointed hour and then go to Big Mouth cave.

Eight o'clock came—then eight thirty and the two girls jumped in the car impatient to get started for the cave.

The authorities had been asked to stay away so that there would be absolutely no interference with the return of the babies.

"Won't it be grand having them back," Mary said excitedly.

"And in less than twenty-four hours," Betty added, "Mr. Carter is certainly a peach."

Betty looked at her wrist watch as she neared the approach to the cave.

It was eight fifty-five.

The two girls were silent as the little roadster turned into the cave road.

"We won't be a minute early," Betty said, "because if those people have any feelings they will not deliver the babies until the last minute."

Mary was too excited to reply.

Her eager eyes were searching for the exact spot from which the babies had vanished.

Then she let out a scream of joy; for there in the seat beneath the large tree sat the two babies just as she had left them the morning before.

Mary was the first out of the car.

"Thank goodness," she breathed, "they're safe."

And safe they were except for tears that were rolling down their cheeks.

Betty rushed over and picked up one child while Mary picked up the other and held them close to her.

As if by magic the babies started to coo and stop crying.

"They don't seem to be hurt a bit," Mary said enthusiastically, "at least the kidnapers were kind to them."

Betty helped Mary and the babies back in the car then paused to look around a bit.

"This is the most mysterious case I have ever heard of," Betty said as she got back in the car, "I'd like to have a look around but I think I'd better take you and the babies back to my house where Aunt Martha can feed and bathe them."

"But first," she said, "I think we ought to let the police and Walter Carter know they are safe."

Mary wanted to thank Walter Carter personally so after they had stopped by the police station they went directly to the home of the man who had been good enough to pay out ten thousand dollars for the return of the babies.

"I was only too glad to do that for you Mary," he told them, "I realized that I would have paid ten times that amount for my own had they been kidnapped and after all I was really responsible for this anyway. They meant to take mine."

Mrs. Carter caressed the babies tenderly and then Betty and Mary started for home.

By now Betty was extremely anxious to start investigating on her own.

She did not tell Mary but the search had just started for her. She was determined to get Walter Carter's money back for him and at the same time learn what those mysterious screams meant that Ruth and Bob Stone had heard.

Aunt Martha greeted them at the door.

"Mercy me," she exclaimed, "they did keep their word."

And then the aged housekeeper gave thanks for the safe return of the babies.

Betty did not linger long. Making some excuse to Aunt Martha and Mary she started out for the cave section almost immediately.

When she arrived back there she found the section filled with officers trying to uncover some clue.

Betty spoke to Sheriff West and then proceeded to do some investigating on her own.

"Somehow I believe this all ties up with the caves in some way," she thought to herself, "how else could the babies have vanished in thin air."

After studying the mound behind the tree from which the babies had disappeared Betty started out for the Reynolds house.

"There's got to be an answer to this somewhere," she told herself, "things like this don't just happen of their own accord."

The front door was open as it had been on the previous day and Betty walked in cautiously.

At first appearance everything was just as it had been the day before but Betty was now determined to move things around.

"I just know that the secret of this entire affair is right here in this house," she reasoned. "And I'm going to find it."

Betty searched every room carefully without any results.

She was about to leave the bedroom downstairs when she stopped short.

"I have the strangest feeling," she thought, "just as though someone were watching me."

She studied the ceiling carefully and tapped the walls with her knuckles but they sounded solid.

Closet doors were opened, rugs removed, and pictures pushed aside but Betty remained baffled.

She sat down on the bed to think.

"I wonder if I dare spend a night here," she asked herself. "I'm sure that would give me the answer."

Dangerous as such an evening would be she felt that it was the only way she could uncover the dreadful secret of the Reynolds mansion and she was about to decide to do it when her eyes rested on a large clump of dirt in one corner of the room.

She went over and picked it up carefully.

To her utter surprise it was still somewhat moist.

"This wasn't here yesterday," she thought, "and I don't think any of the officers have been in this house today.

Betty wrapped the piece of dirt up carefully in her handkerchief and placed it in her pocket.

Then she went back to the cave region but was surprised to find everyone gone.

She got in her car and started back to town.

"Perhaps this piece of dirt doesn't mean a thing," she thought, "but I can't afford to leave a stone unturned."

Then a smile crossed her face.

"I'll take it to Professor Crane at the high school and have him analyze it," she thought. "He makes a hobby of such things and he can tell me just where the dirt is found."

Betty found Professor Crane in his laboratory laboring over some test tubes.

"Why, Betty I'm so glad to see you. It's nice of you to come back to see an old teacher."

Betty smiled, then said:

"And this time I've got a job for you," she began, "remember how you used to make us dissect things and analyze them? Well, I've got a piece of dirt here that I'd like to have you analyze."

The man laughed.

"Why of course, Betty," he answered, "what would you like to know about it?"

"I've got a hunch on the kidnapping case," she answered, "and I want to know where this special kind of dirt is found. There's most likely nothing to it, but I knew you'd help me," she finished handing the handkerchief that contained the dirt to the professor.

"It won't take a minute to tell you," he answered as he unwrapped it and studied it.

Betty watched intently as the professor adjusted his microscope over the moist dirt.

"I think I know what it is without doing this," he told her, "but I'll be sure."

For several minutes he worked with his gadgets without saying a word, then he turned to Betty.

"Just as I thought," he told her, "this is a specimen of earth that is found only in the caves in this region. It's easy to tell because of its contents."

Betty smiled and thanked him.

"Does that help you?" he asked.

"It certainly does,"—Betty answered enthusiastically. "It might even solve the kidnapping case."

**B**ETTY thanked the professor again and, after promising to let him know of any important developments, she dashed out of the laboratory and into her car.

"Now I've really got something," she thought, "and it all ties up with my suspicions. There's a hidden cave back of this entire mystery. A hidden cave that leads to the Reynolds estate. That would explain the screams at night and the mysterious gum wrapper."

Betty did not dare to think too much of what she had discovered.

"I'm not going to say a word to anyone," she decided, "because if I do it's likely to get back to the kidnapers. And I've got to work fast if I want to catch them before they skip the country."

"I wonder just what part the gypsies are playing in this?" she asked herself as she drove away.

"If I thought I could learn anything I'd go to the gypsy camp and have them tell my fortune."

Betty knew that a visit to the gypsy camp alone would be unwise, so she decided to go home and pick up Mary and take her along.

"It will give me an excuse to look over the place anyway," she thought.

Mary was playing with the babies when Betty arrived.

"I want you to do something for me," she asked Mary.

"After all you've done for me I'll certainly be glad to do anything," Mary told her.

"I am going to the gypsy camp and have my fortune told," she said, "and I want you to come with me."

"I'll be glad to go with you if you want me to Betty," she answered. "But do you think it's wise?"

"It will help me gather some more information," Betty told her. "We'll have lunch and then go right over."

If Betty had asked Mary anything at this point she would have gladly obliged her, yet she hesitated at this.

When lunch was over they left the babies in charge of Aunt Martha and started out.

"You're certainly getting well acquainted with this section," Mary laughed.

"I'm learning more about it than I knew there was to learn," Betty returned. "And there's a lot yet to be discovered."

When they reached the gypsy camp Betty and Mary got out and walked over to the leader, who had advanced to meet them.

There was a gruff look on his face, as though he did not welcome the two girls.

"What can I do for you?" he asked.

"I would like to have my full fortune read," Betty said, looking around her on all sides.

"That will cost you a dollar," the leader said, as though such a price would be too great.

"That is all right," Betty assured him. "Give me your very best fortune teller and I will pay you now."

Betty took a dollar bill from her pocketbook and handed it to the man, who motioned to an elderly woman—not the one who had visited her home—to come forward.

Betty noticed a strange look pass between the leader and the woman.

"Come with me," the woman said as she started towards a tent, "and I will tell you what the future holds for you."

Betty asked Mary to wait for her.

Inside the tent the old woman sat down opposite Betty.

"Let me see your hand," she began.

"I want to be told everything," Betty said to her. "Both the good and the bad."

"I will not withhold anything unless telling you would harm you," the gypsy said.

She studied Betty's hand carefully before she spoke.

A strange light came into her eyes and then dimmed as though a horrible thought had come to her.

"You are in great danger," the woman began. "It is so pronounced that I can hardly see anything else."

There was a pause.

The old woman gazed about her.

Betty looked to the rear of the tent. She saw a menacing black silhouette against the rear.

The old woman smiled.

"But you must not worry," she continued. "Fate will be kind to you if you are wise. You must not interfere with other people's lives. It is written that such actions will bring you untold danger."

The woman studied closer.

"I see your father," said. "He is interested in some kind of legal work. He has just made a trip to the bedside of a sick relative. He, too, is in danger."

Betty broke in.

"Is there anything else there?"

"I see good health and good fortune for you if you choose to attend to your own affairs. You will be happy and make a good marriage."

Betty withdrew her hand.

"That is all?"

"That is all I can tell you," the woman said, looking towards the black outline on the tent.

Betty thanked her and withdrew.



Mary's waiting had made her nervous.

"Are you ready to go?" she asked Betty.

Betty chanced one more look around and then answered.

"Yes, I am ready."

"Doesn't the other lady want a reading?" the old woman asked.

Mary looked at Betty uneasily.

"Yes, I think she does," Betty answered.

The old woman smiled. The leader scowled at her.

"There will be no more readings today," he announced. "We are very busy. Perhaps tomorrow."

Betty saw the significance of the move. She knew that the leader did not want her to linger about.

He moved forward as though to ask them to go.

Betty said: "Perhaps we will return tomorrow."

The gypsies watched the two girls get in the car and drive away.

It was several minutes later that Mary spoke.

"Why didn't he want her to read my fortune?" she asked.

"Because he knew that I was studying the camp," Betty told her.

"And he knows that he is doing things he shouldn't be doing."

Mary was puzzled.

"You really think they know something about the kidnapping?" she asked.

"I *know* they do," Betty told her, "and when I can link the old mansion up with the gypsy camp I believe we will have the solution to the kidnapping."

"It's all too much for me," Mary protested. "I wish I could think things out the way you can, Betty."

"Just don't say a word to anyone," Betty told her, "and I'll have this case cleared up before you know it."

The drive back home seemed very short, for both of the girls had plenty to occupy their minds.

"I just hope they don't drag Dad into this," Betty said as they approached the house.

## CHAPTER VI

### The Devil's Sitting Room

**T**HAT night Betty sat turning the case over in her mind. "There is one thing certain," she told herself. "There is some mysterious connection between the Reynolds estate and the caves. The clod of earth proves that."

Mary Nichols had put the babies to bed and sat reading a book, allowing Betty freedom to think.

Betty got out a pad and pencil and jotted down all of the events of the past few days.

"If only there was someone around here who knew a lot about these caves," she thought.

Turning to Mary, she asked:

"Is there anyone around here who knows these caves thoroughly?"

Mary shook her head at first, then answered.

"Not unless it's old man Saxon," she said, "and you wouldn't want to ask any favors of him."

"I'll ask favors of anyone who can shed any light on this case," Betty answered, "but I don't think old man Saxon is trustworthy."

Betty had hardly finished when a strange light came in her eyes.

"Do you think he could have anything to do with this mystery case?" she asked.

Mary laughed aloud.

"Why, no, Betty," she answered. "He's as poor as a church mouse. Never has a cent for anything and is always looking for bargains."

Betty did not reply for a moment.

"I wonder if he would let anyone know it even if he did have money," she said finally. "He always struck me as a miser type."

"Maybe you're right," Mary said.

"I wonder if I dare question him?" Betty asked.

"He knows more about these caves than anyone else, but it gives me goose-pimples to think of having anything to do with him."

It was getting late and Betty and Mary were already sleepy.

"I'll think about it some more," Betty announced, getting up, "and see how I feel about it in the morning."

"And I'm going to join you in going to bed," Mary announced. "A

few more days like the past few and I'll be a wreck."

The two girls retired to their rooms.

Betty lay thinking for a few minutes.

"Did she dare speak with Saxon?"

She went to sleep with the question on her mind.

The next day was an exact contrast to the two preceding ones.

Outside dark clouds hid the sun and a heavy driving rain beat against the window panes.

Betty slept quite late and lay in bed thinking for some time after she awakened.

"Certainly this was no day to question an old grouch like Dave Saxon. Yet there was no time to be lost," she reasoned.

"I'll have breakfast and go over to his place," Betty decided. "He won't want to show me around today, but maybe he can tell me some things I want to know."

Mary and Aunt Martha had breakfast waiting for Betty when she went downstairs.

"What delicious looking pan cakes," Betty enthused, "and a perfect choice for a mean day."

They all three enjoyed the pan cakes and sausage, and then Betty announced her plans to Mary.

"But, Betty," Mary protested, "today is such a bad day. You'll catch your death of cold. You won't be able to accomplish anything."

"There's no time to be lost," Betty answered. "Those men will be getting out of the country with the money and then we won't be able to catch them at all. I can't allow this weather to hold me up."

Mary laughed and shook her head.

"You sure talk like a real detective," she said, "and act like one, too. Do you want me to go with you?"

Betty thought a minute, then answered:

"No, Mary. I think I'd better go alone. "He might talk more that way."

Betty put on her oilskin coat and an old hat and started for her car.

The Saxon cabin, for indeed it was no more, was located on the other side of the road from the Reynolds estate.

Betty did not know the place very well nor did anyone else, for Dave Saxon was somewhat of a hermit, living alone and apart from the world. It had always been a mystery as to how he managed to get along on his meagre little garden patch, but once in a long while tourists paid him to take them through the caves and this, he explained, was enough for his taxes.

As Betty stopped her car in front of the run down little cabin she saw the old man's face peering out of a window.

There was no bell so she knocked loudly.

There was a sound of shuffling feet inside.

Betty danced up and down to keep warm. The rain was cold and she was anxious to get inside.

After a few minutes she knocked, this time louder.

The shuffling inside seemed to quicken its pace. But no one appeared at the door.

Betty was growing impatient when the weather-beaten door opened, revealing the age lined face of Dave Saxon.

It was not the face of a happy man and Betty knew it.

"What do you want?" he growled without asking her in.

"I would like to talk with you about the caves, Mr. Saxon," Betty answered, "I understand that you know more about them than any other man in this section."

The old man remained stone-faced.

"What do you want to know about them?" he asked.

Betty decided to be forward, she took a step inside the door.

"May I come in, it's raining you know," she asked.

Dave Saxon looked at the girl strangely, then motioned for her to come in. The bare room was anything but inviting but Betty walked over to the fireplace and warmed her hands.

"I don't dare allow this man to know my real purpose," she told herself. "He's not my friend, I can see that."

"Do you mind if I sit down?" she asked.

"I know about all there is to know about these caves," he began without answering her question.

Betty was trying to be friendly.

She thought quickly.

"We're giving a cave party," she told him, "and we want to do some unusual things. Most everyone knows all of the explored caves. I was wondering if you could either guide us or tell us about some unknown and unexplored passages."

The man looked at Betty and rubbed his chin as he studied her.

"We'll pay you well," she added.

Dave Saxon's weakness was money and Betty knew it.

"I don't know," he said finally, "There ain't many new ones."

"We'd pay you twenty-five dollars," Betty ventured. "If you could tell us about some exciting ones."

"Twenty-five dollars?" the old man's eyes lit up greedily.

"Yes," she said, "we want it to be an exciting party."

The man was interested for the first time.

He appeared to be in deep thought.

"There's a secret passage from the main tunnel that leads out to the old Long place," he began.

Betty was impatient.

"Everybody knows that one," she answered. "I mean something that only you know about."

The man realized that he was dealing with a smart girl.

"I'll have to think," he said. "If it weren't such a rotten day I'd take you over and show you some. They're hard to describe and I'm about the only one knows how to get to them."

"Perhaps if I came back tomorrow you'd have time to think just where they are. And if you'd give me a chart I'm sure I could find them."

"That would be all right," he answered.

"And after I've seen them I'll give you the money," she told him. Dave Saxon leered and rubbed his hands together.

"That will be fine," he gloated.

Betty thanked the man and got up to go.

"I'll show you some secret caves that nobody in these parts knows about," he told her.

Betty left the man and ventured out into the rain again.

"He's just miserly enough to give away some real secrets for twenty-five dollars," she thought as she sped homeward.

**T**HE driving rain beat harder and harder against the windshield as Betty made her way home.

Aunt Martha and Mary greeted Betty upon her arrival.

"I think I'm on the right track," Betty told them when she was settled before her own fire."

"That old man Saxon is a dangerous character," Aunt Martha put in.

"I know that I can't trust him very far," Betty added, "but he's so miserly that I think he would let out any secret if he was well paid for it."

"Did he tell you about any secret passageways?" Mary asked.

"No, not yet," Betty answered, "but he's going to tell me about them and show them to me tomorrow."

"You don't mean that you are going into the cave with him?" Mary wanted to know.

"It's the only way I can solve this mystery," Betty told her "and I've made up my mind that I'm going to get to the bottom of it. I told him that we were giving a cave party and that we would pay him twenty-five dollars to show us some new passageways."

"But what if he finds out there is not going to be a cave party?" Mary asked.

"He won't have time to find that out," Betty told her, "I'm going to move fast once I learn what he knows about the entrances and exits."

Mary was worried for Betty. This was dangerous business and she knew it.

All that afternoon the two girls discussed the case and watched the rain grow lighter and then as night descended fade away completely.

"I do hope it's a nice day tomorrow," Betty said when it was time to go to bed, "because I'm determined to go to the cave with old man Saxon."

Sure enough the next day dawned clear and sunny and Betty was out of the house bright and early.

"I've got to stop by the bank and get that twenty-five dollars," she told Mary and Aunt Martha, "he won't say a word unless I have that."

After stopping by the bank and getting the money she proceeded to the Saxon cabin.

It was as though the old man had been waiting for her.

"Good morning, Miss Baker," he greeted in an altogether different tone than he had the previous morning, "I'm all ready to go."

Betty told the man to get in beside her.

"Go to the main entrance first," he told her, "I've got lights and we can work in from there."

Five minutes later they were in front of the opening of Big Mouth cave. Betty allowed the man to precede her.

"There are so many unknown passages in here that I don't know which ones to show you first," he began.

"Just use your own judgment," Betty told him, "I'll leave that all to you."

The man seemed pleased.

They entered the cave and Betty crouched behind him.

He was walking to the right.

"Keep down low," he warned, "there's a side entrance here that no one suspects."

Betty followed the man down the main tunnel, then stopped short as he did.

He held his searchlight high above his head to his right.

"Just step on this ledge," he told her, "You'll have to do a little climbing."

Betty was following closely, carefully. The damp, dank air of the underground passageway filled her nostrils and chills ran down her spine but she climbed up after the man.

"Crouch low," he told her, "this is a very small opening."

Bending down Betty found herself climbing through a small black opening and emerging into a large passageway which she had never seen before.

"Why, this is even larger than the main tunnel," she cried.

The man grunted.

Betty's light cast eerie shadows against the walls as they proceeded.

"Right up here," the man was saying, "there is the largest opening in the whole cave."

And sure enough Betty saw a huge room before them. Rocks were about on every side as though they had been used for chairs.

"I call this the Devil's Sitting Room," the old man said.

Betty was too interested to reply. She was studying every arch and attempting to tie it up with the outside. And already she knew that this passageway was close to the oak from which the babies had been stolen.

"What a strange name," she said finally.

"But very fitting don't you think?" the man asked with a laugh.

"Very," Betty managed to say.

They proceeded on past the large opening for several hundred yards and then the man said, "This is the end of this tunnel. It just runs into a blind alley. We'll go back and I'll show you some more."

Betty allowed the man to pass and again lead the way.

As they retraced their steps Betty studied every curve of the tunnel and made sure that she knew it well.

Back in the main opening the man sat down and lit a corn cob pipe.

"We'll rest a minute before we go on," he told her.

Betty fixed the passageways in her mind.

"Do you think you will be able to find them alone?" he questioned.

"I'm sure I will be," she answered.

After a short pause Dave Saxon proceeded to reenter the cave.

"This one is the hardest of all to find," he began. "It's several hundred yards in from the main tunnel."

Betty followed Dave Saxon.

He stopped near a large rock and seemed to step right down into an underground river.

"Watch your footing," he warned her, "or you will be a goner."

Betty followed the advice carefully.

"This river fools most of them," he told her, "but it's simple once you know it."

As far as Betty could figure out this tunnel ran directly inland and then in the direction of the Reynolds estate.

After they had walked some two hundred yards Saxon said:

"This tunnel goes on for quite a way, I don't know how far, I've followed it for miles in but there seems to be no end to it. Better not go any further in. I got lost in here myself onct."

Betty was satisfied.

She had learned the thing that she wanted to know.

Saxon guided her back to the cave opening and stood waiting.

"Now do I get my money?" he asked anxiously.

"You surely do," Betty told him, "and thank you a lot."

"The man's eyes gleamed when Betty handed him the money.

"I'll drive you home," she told him.

They got in the car and Betty stepped on the gas.

"How many people know about those passageways," Betty asked.

"Nobody that I know of," Saxon told her. "Reckon I'm about the only one and now you know."

When they arrived back in front of the Saxon cabin Betty let the old man out. He said goodbye and Betty was about to start away when the door of the cabin opened and a menacing looking pair of men stepped out.

Betty caught her breath—for she remembered them as the two men who had followed her in the car.

"Where have you been Saxon?" one of them demanded.

The old man seemed to be suddenly paralyzed.

"I-er-er," he stuttered, "I just drove into town with Miss Baker."

Betty did not know what to make of the situation.

"You're sure you didn't drive over to the Cave?" the other man put in.

Betty realized what was up.

"I just gave Mr. Saxon a lift," she called, "that's all."

"Well, it better be all," one of the men said walking over to the car. "How did you know Saxon anyway?"

"Everybody around here knows Mr. Saxon," Betty replied regaining her composure.

The two men looked at each other puzzled.

"Now if you are finished may I go?" Betty asked.

The harder looking of the two men walked over to her car.

"Yes," he said you can go, "but you'd better keep away from this man Saxon—because he's bad news."

Betty gave Saxon a hurried look and stepped on the gas, leaving the two men standing beside Dave Saxon.

"I wonder what this means?" she asked herself as she sped away.



## CHAPTER VII

### A Roadside Struggle

**B**ETTY knew that there was no time to be lost if she was to solve the mystery before the men had a chance to skip the country. "I'll go back to the caves this afternoon," she was thinking when suddenly she realized that a car was following her, gaining on her. In a moment the big car with the two men pulled up alongside of her almost running her into the ditch.

Betty swayed her car, and pulled on the emergency brake.

The two men got out and walked over to Betty.

She was dumbfounded.

"We want to talk to you," the larger of the two began.

Betty did not reply, her lips were frozen.

"There've been a lot of strange things happening around here," he began, "and you seem a little too interested. If you're as smart a girl as we think you are you'll mind your own business."

The man paused, and a sly self-assured snicker escaped from his lips.

"Otherwise, things might not go so well with you."

Betty nodded her head.

"Now get us straight—" he was saying as a touring car appeared on the hill beyond.

He stopped short.

Betty recognized Bob Stone in the car.

There was a moment of silence as Bob Stone pulled his car up, sensing trouble.

"Hello, Betty," he shouted, "anything wrong?"

The men were frowning.

The shorter of the two who hadn't done any talking moved over to the car.

"Nothing wrong, stranger," he said menacingly, "if you keep going and mind your own business, otherwise—"

Bob Stone was no coward—and he was no man to be bluffed easily. Sitting in the car he had looked like a short man but as he raised up and got out the two men saw that he was a six footer and strongly built.

"Don't Bob," Betty pleaded, "I'm not being harmed."

The man who had done the talking stepped over to where Bob was getting out of the car.

"Better do as the girl says," he began, "or we'll have to muss you up."

Bob Stone did not wait for words, he acted.

A straight left to the jaw sent the taller man sprawling in the road and the other man lunged at him.

Betty screamed as she saw Bob Stone fighting off one man while the other made a dash for their car.

She knew what that meant—a gun.

Quick as a flash she was out of her car and after the second man.

Bob sensed the situation and ran toward the men's car.

He made a flying tackle and stopped the man just as he was a foot or two from the running board.

But now the other ruffian was up and running towards Bob Stone.

Betty tried to stop him but he pushed her into the underbrush that lined the road.

A lucky blow caught Bob under the chin and downed him for a moment.

In that split second the two men were in their car and off.

Betty pulled herself out of the bushes.

Bob Stone got up.

"Well, we put them on the run anyway," he began.

"Are you hurt?" Betty wanted to know.

Bob Stone rubbed his chin.

"Not a bit Betty," he laughed, "what were they after you for?"

Betty told Bob the story of the caves and made him promise not to tell a soul.

"I'm sure I'm on the right track," she enthused, "if only those men don't interfere too much."

Bob tried to get Betty to turn the entire case over to the police but she could not see it that way.

"They're working on their own angles," she told him, "and they can be just as right as I think I can."

She paused a moment.

"Have you heard any more strange noises coming from the old Reynolds place?" Betty questioned.

"Not a sound," Bob told her, "they stopped as suddenly as they started, we can't figure it out."

Betty thanked Bob for coming to her rescue.

"You'd better be careful, Betty," he told her, "maybe I'd better follow you home."

"Nonsense," she assured him, "those men aren't going to harm me."

Bob Stone shook his head in admiration.

"Remember me to Ruth," Betty said, "and don't tell anybody about this little fight," she asked, "I'll take care of thing myself."

Bob Stone watched Betty's car disappear ahead.

"What a girl," he sighed to himself when she was out of sight.

For a while Betty thought she ought to stop by and tell the police what had happened, then she decided to go straight home.

"I'll go back to the caves this afternoon," she said, "and I'll arm myself with father's revolver. Then I'll be safe."

But Betty was not destined to return to the caves that afternoon for when she returned home Mary greeted her with a telegram.

"This came right after you left this morning," Mary told her.

Betty ripped the envelope open and read the contents. Her hands dropped to her sides, as she handed it to Mary.

Mary read aloud.

"Sister died last night. Must remain for funeral. Will be home in three days." Signed Father.

"Aunt Margaret was his favorite sister," Betty told Mary.

When lunch was over Betty and Mary sat down in the living room.

"Don't you think your father will be angry when he finds out that you have been taking so many chances," Mary asked.

"I'm not going to take any more chances," Betty answered, as she got up and went to her father's room.

When she returned she was holding her father's revolver and assuring herself that it was loaded.

"Are you sure you can shoot it?" Mary wanted to know.

"Father and I have shot at targets often," she answered, "and he approves of my knowing how to use it. Says it is a real safeguard against danger."

Mary frowned with dissatisfaction.

"I'd be afraid of it," she sighed.

"I'm glad I know how to shoot it," Betty answered, "because from the way things are going I'm afraid I'll have to use it sooner or later."

Mary did not know what to say.

Betty smiled.

"Don't worry," the girl told her, "the sooner we clear up these mysterious happenings around here the better off the community will be."

Mary knew that Betty spoke the truth—but she still felt uneasy.

"I'm going to take this with me to the caves this afternoon, and if anybody tries anything I'll use it," Betty was saying.

"Do you want to go with me?"

"I don't want to," Mary answered frankly, "but I wouldn't think of letting you go alone."

Betty was amused.

"Nothing can happen to us when we're protected," she answered.

Mary prepared to go while Betty went out to get in the car.

"You keep a careful watch to see that nobody is following us," Betty told Mary.

"Yes, and for the first time in my life if I see a policeman following us I'll be the happiest girl in the world," Mary shivered.

Betty laughed and shot the car forward, headed for Big Mouth Cave.

**A**LTHOUGH Mary watched carefully she saw no sign of a man following their car.

"So far, so good," Betty said as they arrived at the cave entrance, "now for some real investigating."

The girls had worn old clothes so that they could do any amount of climbing about.

As they entered the cave Betty switched on her searchlight. Then she made sure that her revolver was handy.

"We go straight here," Betty said, "and then turn to the left. I want to take a good look at the place Saxon called 'The Devil's Sitting Room.'"

"The Devil's Sitting Room?" Mary sighed, "What on earth could that be?"

"You'll see soon enough," Betty said, "and I believe it will tell us a lot."

The two girls bore to the left and climbed through the small opening that old man Saxon had shown Betty.

The darkness was complete as the girls moved forward, crouched low. In a few minutes they stood in the center of the large opening.

"This is the place," Betty told Mary who was looking around wide-eyed.

"What a fitting name," Mary managed to utter.

"Now to take a good look around here," Betty said moving about cautiously, "I've got a hunch that this is where your babies were taken when they disappeared.

Mary was too frightened to say anything. Instead she followed Betty's footsteps.

"I'm going to look in the places old man Saxon didn't explain," Betty said, "I'm sure he didn't tell me all he knows."

Betty held her searchlight high in one corner of the room and paused.

You wait here, Mary," she said, "while I try to climb through this small opening."

Betty handed her light to Mary.

Then she jumped back quietly while a winged creature flew by out of nowhere.

"Whew," she uttered, "that bat scared me."

Mary stood holding the searchlight, speechless.

Betty's body made its way through a small opening, then she looked back.

"Hand me the light and come on," she told Mary.

Mary pushed the searchlight forward and then crawled through the hole.

"Just as I thought," Betty reasoned, "this leads to somewhere as sure as my name is Betty Baker."

Mary was in no mood to add anything, she was following.

In one corner Betty spied a small ray of light filtering through. It was hardly noticeable, but Betty's keen eye caught it. She walked over to where it was.

"Uh, huh," she stated, "here's the opening through which the babies were passed as sure as you're alive."

Mary's eyes bulged.

"You're a genius, Betty," she said, "but I'm so frightened I'm about to die."

Betty was too busy to reply. She handed her light to Mary and placed her flat hands against the ceiling wall next to the small opening. To her surprise it gave way easier than she thought and a flood of light made its way into the darkened chamber.

A moment later Betty's head was sticking out of the hole. She motioned to Mary.

"I'll climb out, you hand me the light."

Betty raised herself out of the hole and found herself out in broad daylight then she got down on her knees. Mary handed her the light. Betty helped Mary out.

"It's almost unbelievable," Mary sighed as she studied the flat rock that had covered the opening. Why, this is the valley directly back of the mound back of the oak tree from which the babies disappeared."

"Right you are," Betty finished, "we've got something here—but we haven't got it all."

Betty replaced the flat stone.

"I don't want anyone to know of our discovery," she told Mary.

After studying the ground carefully Betty led the way back to the cave opening by way of the mound and the oak.

"What do you make of it?" Mary asked.

"It's all very simple," the girl answered. "There's still another passageway leading off from the Devil's Sitting Room that we haven't discovered. And it leads to—" But Betty broke off short, not daring to say what she thought.

"What's our next move?" Mary asked.

Betty thought a moment.

"We're going to retrace our steps in that same tunnel," she said finally, "and I hope we find that other passage."

Again Betty led the way into the cave and once more they climbed through the small opening and arrived in the Devil's Sitting Room. Betty searched every corner for another outlet.

"It looks as though I were wrong," she admitted, "I can't find anything else."

The girls were about to go when another bat darted out of the blackness and flew past them.

"I'll just take a look in that corner again," she said.

Betty held the light high and studied the wall closely.

She shook her head.

Then Mary saw her smile.

"Hold this light, Mary," she was saying, "it looks as though there was an opening here but it's been filled in with dirt."

Betty dug into the soft earth with her hands.

"That's just what it is," she mused. "It's another opening."

In a few minutes Betty reached for her light and led the way through the space, crawling on her hands and knees.

"We've got to be careful," she told Mary, in a whisper, "I've a hunch this tunnel leads to something real."

"What if we get lost," Mary asked.

"Dig deep in the ground with your heels," Betty answered, "then we can find our way back."

Betty went forward slowly, cautiously for what seemed like hours.

Both girls dug their heels into the soft ground deeply.

Finally Betty stopped.

"I don't know how far in this tunnel goes, but there seems to be no end to it."

"Maybe we'd better turn back," Mary suggested.

"No, Mary," Betty told her, "We've got the secret of this whole affair right in the palms of our hands if we can just keep on. I know I'll solve it now."

And push on Betty did for what seemed like forever.

Finally she paused again.

"I hate to give up," she mused, "but it will take us a long time to get back again and I'm afraid it's getting late."

Mary was only too willing to start back.

"We'll follow the heel prints closely," Betty told Mary, as she went ahead of her.

Mary came up in the rear.

"If we ever got lost in this place no one would ever find us," Mary was saying.

Betty watched the floor of the tunnel closely.

Mary thought of her twin boys at the Baker home.

On and on they walked. The silence and darkness about them seemed endless.

"Are you sure you're on the right track?" Mary asked.

Betty paused before she answered.

"Yes," she said, "we're still following the heelprints."

Half an hour later they were still walking in complete darkness.

Betty stopped and held her light high.

Mary looked at Betty puzzled.

As the light played on Betty's face Mary saw a look that she had never seen on her friend's face before—it was a look of uncertainty—almost of fright.

"I don't believe we passed this way before," Mary said.

"I'm sure we didn't," Betty answered uneasily, "yet there are women's heelprints here," she finished.

The two girls stood silent, perfectly still, the light making weird shadows on the walls.

Betty shifted uneasily, then she said:

"Let's go back a ways and see if we can recognize any of the chambers," she suggested.

Mary was speechless. She followed Betty in silence for inwardly she knew that they had lost their way and that they were at the mercy of the eerie darkness that wrapped them within the ghostly walls of Big Mouth cave.



*Betty could not believe what her eyes beheld.*



## CHAPTER VIII

### An Underground Adventure

BETTY summoned all of her courage.

"Let's take a close look at these heelprints," she said, stooping down.

Mary followed suit, her eyes wandering around the overhanging walls.

With the two lights on the tunnel floor the two girls studied the heelprints closely.

"Why," Betty said in a half whisper, "they're not from my shoes."

"Nor mine, either," Mary added.

Betty bent closer.

"Look, Mary, there are men's footprints, too. Those are too big for womens' shoes."

"What can this mean?" Mary asked.

"It means that a woman and a man have passed here not very long ago," Betty added, "and it means that we might be within a short distance of the solution of our case—or—" but she broke off short.

Mary looked at her wrist watch.

"It's six o'clock, Betty," Mary whispered, "Aunt Martha will be worrying about us."

"We can't do anything about it now," Betty answered, "and we've got to be mighty careful."

The girl stood up erect.

"Are you game to follow these footprints?" she asked Mary uncertainly.

"I'll follow you anywhere, Betty," she answered, "but I'm frightened half to death."

"Follow closely then and don't say a word," Betty told her companion. "We have no idea where this is going to lead us."

Betty moved in the direction of the heelprints, slowly, cautiously.

The silence was broken every once in a while by the trickle trickle of water dripping from the sides of the tunnel walls. Several times bats darted out of nowhere but the girls pushed on.

"This is hopeless," Mary finally whispered, "these heelprints continue forever."

Betty shushed her.

"What else can we do?" she asked. "This is as good a way as any to follow and I've got a feeling that it's going to lead us somewhere."

On and on the girls trudged careful always to follow the prints in the soft earth.

An hour passed. Then another.

"What if we are walking in circles?" Mary ventured.

"I'm sure we're not," Betty told her, "I'm watching the walls closely."

Betty was becoming exhausted. It was now seven o'clock and she had eaten only a light lunch but she pressed on into the darkness.

Several times they stopped and listened but only silence greeted them.

Betty thought of what old man Saxon had told her about getting lost himself and she shivered at the thought.

What if they could not find their way out?

She did not dare think of the outcome of such a tragedy.

Their feet were wet with the walking and the cold was beginning to penetrate their light summer clothes.

Betty was straining every nerve for some sound—some hope to which to cling.

Suddenly she stopped short and turned to Mary.

She put her finger to her lips to be sure Mary said nothing.

Faint sounds came from the distance as though out of nowhere. Then they died away and silence reigned again.

Betty ventured a whisper.

"I'll put out my light," she said, "you keep in the background—I believe we're approaching something."

Mary obeyed and watched Betty's light go out. Betty proceeded slower.

Again they heard the sounds. This time they were louder and closer.

Betty stopped.

Mary's questioning eyes met Betty's.

Now Betty moved forward again.

"Take my hand," she whispered to Mary, "and cling close to this wall. They may be coming this way."

Mary did as Betty ordered.

As the girls moved forward the voices grew louder and more distinct. Then they would die down almost completely.

"We're taking an awful chance," Betty thought to herself, "we're walking right into the jaws of trouble."

Several minutes later Mary felt Betty's hand grip her own tightly and seem to push her back.

In the distance, as if around a corner a dim light flickered.

The two girls could not see each other in the darkness but Mary seemed to sense Betty's every move.

They listened intently.

"That's every penny you'll get," a gruff voice was saying, "I tell you they only delivered eight thousand."

Betty gripped Mary's hand tighter.

"That's what you say," a voice with a foreign accent shouted back. "I know you are lying. They delivered ten thousand and I want my share."

Mary snuggled close to Betty.

"You'll take what I give you," the first voice said.

"I'll take my half and no less," the second voice answered.

Just then there was the sound of scuffling feet and a muffled scream coming from the same direction.

"Shut that dame up," the first voice said, "and if she don't behave give her a sock."

Betty was thinking fast.

Here she was within hearing distance of solving the mystery and yet she was helpless.

Mary was paralyzed with fright.

"Are you going to take it or not?" the first man continued.

There was no answer. Then a third voice broke in.

"Take it Spike," it was saying, "and let's get out of here. Otherwise we'll all be behind the bars."

"Not until he gives me a fair deal," the second voice repeated.

The sound of nervous, pacing feet followed.

"So you're going to make trouble, eh?" the first voice said, "Well I'll show you what trouble is."

With that the two girls heard the sound of scuffling feet, heard a blow struck and a man's body thud against the dirt floor.

"I'll get you for this," the second voice was saying, "you can't cheat me and get away with it."

"I'll do what I please," the first voice answered with a gruff laugh.

The tension was beginning to tell on the two girls.

"What if they come this way?" Betty thought. "They couldn't miss seeing us. Then we'd be at their mercy."

Mary tugged at Betty's arm. But Betty knew that it would do no good to turn back now. They had been helplessly lost before and the walk back would take at least three hours and still they did not know their way out.

Silence reigned in the chamber ahead.

"Are you going to take the four grand and get out of here?" the first voice demanded.

"I'll come back for my share in the morning," the second voice said, "come along Tony."

Betty held her breath.

"Are they coming this way?" she thought to herself. "If they do we will be caught sure."

But fate was kind to the girls and the voices faded away in the other direction.

"That means that there's an exit just on the other side of them," Betty surmised.

"Let's get out of here tomorrow," a voice that had not been heard said.

"Not until this dame hands over the fifty thousand," the voice that had dominated answered, "She's got it in the bank and I'm not fooling this time. If she don't come through she'll never see daylight again."

Betty drew Mary close to her.

"Laura Reynolds," she whispered.

"And I'm not forgetting about that fresh Baker kid," the voice continued, "she's stuck her finger in just once too often. We'll snatch her tomorrow. I knew how to deal with her kind."

The two girls stood statue like, motionless, vainly trying to think of some move that would free them from this underground prison.

**A**S Betty stood speechless she heard the men planning her kidnaping, heard them threaten Laura Reynolds, and heard them laughing over the cheating they were giving the gypsies.

Betty moved forward a step. Her hands were clinging to the walls. Suddenly her front hand reached what felt like a vacant space.

"I wonder what this can be?" she asked herself, "if it's a drop we'll be doomed. I wonder if I dare take a step in?"

Holding Mary's hand tighter, the young girl stepped forward. At first her foot found no landing place then it reached a footing somewhat lower than the level on which they had been walking.

She rested her weight on it.

"Whew," she sighed.

Then she pulled Mary closer to her and guided her movements.

The turn had been made to the right and now they could not see the dim light from the chamber from which they heard the voices.

"We've got to take this chance," Betty whispered. "It's our only hope.

Mary did not reply, she followed Betty knowing that at any minute a false step might mean death to them both.

Never before had Betty been so careful. Never before had she been so frightened.

There was darkness all about and uncertainty ahead.

They had walked about a hundred feet when Betty's hand touched something in front of her.

She stopped. Her hand ran all around the sides of the wall. The damp cold chilled her already aching body.

"It looks like a dead end," she whispered to Mary.

Betty continued her search in the dark, feeling here and there.

"It doesn't feel like the walls," she said softly. "It feels more like damp wood."

Betty did not know what to say. She knew that this could be a dead end or that it could be an opening.

"But," she reasoned, "if this is an opening why can't I push it in?"

Holding her light high she ran her hand around the dark wall that confronted her.

"It's just a dead end," Mary said hopelessly. "What will we do?"

Just then Betty's hand rested on a hard substance.

She pushed in with all her strength, not daring to say a word.

To her utter surprise the panel—for panel it was—moved forward—allowing her hand to go forward.

"It's an outlet," she whispered to Mary, "but where does it lead?"

The two girls stepped forward. Warmer air and a wooden floor greeted them.

As Mary stepped out of the cave Betty pushed the panel back carefully. The other side of the panel was dry and warm.

"We're out," Mary said still whispering. "But where are we?"

Complete darkness still reigned except for a small ray of light filtering through in front of them.

Betty advanced toward it.

Then she stumbled over something and fell forward.

"Are you hurt Betty?" Mary wanted to know.

"No," answered Betty. "I'm resting on a bed."

Betty stood up and made her way to the light. Her hand touched an oily substance.

"It's a window shade," she said as she raised it.

As the shade went up moonlight filtered into the room disclosing a huge old fashioned four poster bed.

"Mary," Betty enthused. "We're in the Reynolds house."

Mary uttered a sigh of relief, then caught herself short.

"We're out of the cave," she said, coming over to Betty, "but I want to get out of here just as quickly as I can."

Betty had forgotten all about being lost.

She had uncovered the secret of the Reynolds home at last and she knew it.

"Not until I look that panel over and be sure I can find it in the daylight," she told Mary.

As she walked over to the place where they had stood she heard voices coming through.

"It's a good thing I closed that panel," she said as she returned to Mary's side and pulled her out of the bedroom and towards the front door.

"Now we have got to get out of here."

Betty led the way to the front door.

"Let's hide in the bushes and see what we can learn," Betty suggested.

Mary was too exhausted to protest. She looked at her watch. It was eleven-thirty.

Betty pulled her into the bushes to the side of the house from which they had a good look in the room.

Just as they crouched low they saw a light enter the room and by that dim light she recognized the face of the man who had followed her in the car.

She did not dare to speak.

As soon as the men entered the room the one with the light came over and put the shade down.

They heard the low rumbling of voices—but could not make out what the men were saying.

"It's a good thing I know the way back to the cave," Betty told Mary.

"Hadn't we better be going?" Mary wanted to know.

"Yes," the girl agreed. "We can't do anything more here. I'll lead the way."

The girls were as quiet as mice as they moved through the underbrush until Betty spotted the path leading to the cave entrance.

Their feet back on firm ground again both girls heaved a sigh of relief.

"I never thought we would come out of there alive," Mary said finally. "Gosh, but I was frightened."

Betty laughed easily.

The car was still sitting in front of the cave when they arrived and Betty jumped in. Mary was beside her.

As quietly as possible she started the car and moved off slowly.

"Do you think they heard us?" Mary asked.

"Not unless they heard this motor starting," Betty answered.

A feeling of safety came over the girls as Betty pulled into the main road and headed the car for the city.

"What is our next move?" Mary asked.

"I don't know whether to awaken the chief and tell him everything now or wait until morning," Betty answered. "If I was only sure that they would be there at dawn."

"Didn't the man say he was coming back in the morning?" Mary asked.

"That's right," Betty assented. "Aunt Martha will have the police out looking for us if we don't go straight home."

Mary laughed for the first time in hours. She was going to see her babies at last.

As the car passed through the sleepy little town the big clock on the city hall struck twelve.

"Twelve o'clock and all's well," Betty said jovially. "Just think, Mary, the whole mystery has unravelled right before us."

"Right before you, you mean, Betty. I wouldn't have gone to that cave for a million dollars with anyone else."

Betty speeded the car up as she turned into the road leading to home.

"We'll go right to bed," Betty said, "and then we'll get up at the crack of dawn tomorrow."

"You mean today," Mary put in.

Betty laughed as she realized that it was past midnight.

When they arrived home Aunt Martha was sitting up waiting for them.

"Where on earth have you been?" she asked. "I was about to notify the police."

Mary and Betty looked at each other slyly.

"We've had the greatest adventure," Betty answered, "but we'll tell you all about it in the morning."

Betty fixed some hot soup and the girls sipped it enjoyably.

Then they went to their rooms completely exhausted from the tire-some day.

Betty set the alarm clock for six o'clock.

As she switched out the light and crawled into bed between the nice warm blankets she heaved a sigh of relief.

"What a day," she thought, as she dozed off.

## CHAPTER IX

### What Betty Told the Sheriff

**A**LTHOUGH Betty had set her alarm clock for six o'clock she found that she did not need it.

With the first rays of light she was up and out of bed.

"I'll grab a cup of coffee and be on my way," she said.

Five minutes later she was in the kitchen. Mary rushed downstairs. "I'll fix that," Mary told her.

But Betty was already drinking her coffee.

"What if Sheriff West isn't up?" Mary asked.

"Then I'll awaken him," Betty told her.

"Are you coming along?" she questioned.

"I'd love to, but I think I'd better stay here with the babies," Mary said with a note of sadness.

Betty said goodbye and dashed out of the house.

She was in the car in two leaps and off to the city.

When she arrived at the Sheriff's house she was panting hard.

She pressed hard against the doorbell.

Her wristwatch told her it was six forty-five.

She waited a moment, then pressed the doorbell again.

"Just a minute, just a minute," a woman's voice from inside shouted.

Then the sleepy face of Mrs. West peered out at Betty from the door.

"Why, Betty Baker," Mrs. West said. "What on earth are you doing up so early?"

"I've got important news for Sheriff West," Betty gasped between breaths. "I've solved the kidnapping case."

"You've done what?" Sheriff West asked as he walked towards the door.

"I've solved the kidnapping case," she repeated, "and I believe I've found Laura Reynolds."

The Sheriff was waking up fast.

The three were now in the living room.

Betty related the incidents of the day before in short sentences.

Sheriff West ran to the telephone.



"Give me the Chief of Police," he told the operator.

Mrs. West had her arm around the girl.

"You are a brave detective," she said. "Weren't you frightened in the cave?"

"I almost died," confessed Betty.

Sheriff West was connected with the Chief.

Betty heard him tell the Chief the substance of her story.

"Get as many men as you can at once and join me here," the Sheriff said.

Before the officer finished with the phone he had summoned all of his deputy sheriffs to join him at the home at once.

"You'll have to show us the way, Betty," the Sheriff told her.

"I'll do that all right," she answered. "We'll have to find the secret panel in the living room—but I know which wall it is, so it won't be too hard."

"What about the other outlets?" the Sheriff asked.

"I'm not sure of them all. But I know there's one behind the mound back of which the babies disappeared. Then there's the mouth of the cave. And I'm almost sure the outlet the men went out of while we were waiting yesterday comes up in the gypsy camp."

The girl paused.

"And I think it would be a good idea to detail several men to watch the Saxon cabin. I've a hunch that there's an opening near his place."

"Dave Saxon?" the Sheriff wanted to know.

"Yes, that's the man," Betty answered.

The Sheriff did not agree.

"He's the man who told me about the secret passages," Betty told him. "I had to give him twenty-five dollars."

"Maybe you're right," the sheriff answered. "Anyway we won't miss up on a single chance. Why, we've waited five years to clear up the Reynolds case."

Betty and the sheriff walked out on the front porch.

Mrs. West brought her husband a cup of coffee.

One by one the men who had been summoned put in their appearance.

"I had a hunch you'd work this thing out, Betty," the Chief of Police told her after his arrival.

Betty thanked him and answered. "But we haven't captured them yet. And that's going to be a tough job."

Sheriff West had taken charge of the party.

He counted his men.

"There are twenty-five of us all told," he said. "I want us to split up in parties of five. One party will go to the gypsy camp and search thoroughly. A second party will go to the Saxon home and instigate a

search. The third party will guard the opening back of the mound from which the babies were kidnapped. A fourth party will guard the main entrance to Big Mouth Cave. I will take Betty with me to the Reynolds home and we will come in through there. If necessary we'll break down the wall."

After detailing a captain for each five men the Sheriff said:

"Lay back until exactly eight o'clock, men, then move in fast and stay at your posts until you hear from me. And remember that we are dealing with desperate men. Don't take any chances with your own lives. If you must shoot—shoot to kill."

Betty listened carefully. Never before had she taken part in a manhunt. It gave her a thrill to know that it was her detective work that had made all this possible.

"Come along, Betty," the sheriff told her, "follow me in your car."

As the men moved back into their cars and started off it looked like a young army determined to do or die.

It was now seven-thirty and the sun was shining brightly.

"This is going to be the most thrilling adventure of my life," Betty said as she drove her car along the highway towards the Reynolds estate. "I just hope none of our men get hurt."

Sheriff West had taken the lead. Several times he looked back to be sure that Betty was safe.

It was exactly ten minutes to eight when the posse arrived in front of the Reynolds home.

Sheriff West stopped his car and got out.

"We'll wait until eight before we enter," he told his men. "We want this attack to be perfect."

Betty had a clear picture of the bedroom in her mind.

"The secret button can't be hard to find," she told herself. "It's limited to that one wall and we'll press everything there."

The minutes dragged like hours but finally eight o'clock came and the sheriff motioned the men forward.

"We'll make quick work of this," he announced.

Betty was beside him.

As they entered the Reynolds house the sheriff drew his gun. He kept his eyes straight ahead.

"It's in the bedroom," Betty told the party.

Betty led the way, closely followed by the sheriff.

As she entered the room she spoke.

"You see, Sheriff," she said. "They *were* here. There's a candle."

Sheriff West picked up the end of a candle and stuck it in his pocket.

Betty went over to the wall through which she and Mary had passed the night before.

"This is the place," she pointed out. "I'm sure of it."

Sheriff West studied the wall closely.

Betty moved forward, her eye glued on a certain spot in the wood-work.

Slowly she pressed her finger against it.

The men watched her closely.

As if by magic the panel moved forward, creaking uneasily.

Betty stepped back.

Sheriff West looked into the darkness, but said nothing. His face was stern, his mind determined.

The men drew their guns in silence.

"I'll lead the way," Betty said softly, stepping forward into the black chamber.

SHERIFF WEST and the four men were directly behind Betty.

Slowly and silently, she tiptoed ahead watching her footing carefully. Two hundred yards she walked, then she saw the rise in the ground and paused.

"It's just around this corner to the left," she whispered.

Sheriff West pulled the girl back and stepped ahead listening intently.

In the distance he could hear the rumble of voices. There were angry tones.

Then a woman's scream broke the entombed silence.

"Forward, men," the sheriff ordered.

The five men shot forward, their guns drawn.

There was no longer any secret about their presence.

As the officers turned the corner they saw hurrying, retreating feet.

"Halt or we'll shoot," demanded the sheriff as he ran forward. Two men, caught unawares, turned, their hands raised high above their heads. A third man ran in the opposite direction, but Sheriff West did not shoot. He knew only too well that his men would capture the fugitive as he made his exit from the cave.

"Why, Laura Reynolds," Sheriff West enthused. Then he turned to his men. "Keep your guns on those men while I untie Miss Reynolds."

"Thank goodness," Laura Reynolds sighed, "you've come at last."

Betty stepped forward.

The two men scowled. "You brat," one of them said.

"Keep your mouth shut," one of the officers told him.

Betty recognized the two men as the men who had followed her. The men who had fought Bob Stone in the road.

"We'll get you for this," one of them said menacingly.

Sheriff West turned from his task of untying Laura Reynolds.

"You'll not get anyone from now on—the only thing you will get is a stiff sentence."

Betty rushed over to the woman and although they had never seen each other before they were in each other's arms.

"How can I ever thank you," Laura Reynolds was saying. "It has been terrible."

"I'm so glad you're safe," Betty told her. "You must have suffered terribly. I'm Betty Baker—Judge Baker's daughter."

Laura Reynolds drew her arm tighter about Betty and turned to the sheriff.

"The big man has the money they extracted from Mr. Carter for the kidnapping," she said stonily. "It's in his inside pocket."

The sheriff walked over and reached in the man's pocket.

The ruffian drew away.

The sheriff reached out and grabbed him.

"We'll soften you up," he said as he reached into the inside pocket and drew forth a large packet of bills.

The other four officers had searched the men for guns and disarmed them.

"We'll take them back through the Reynolds home," the sheriff ordered.

Then he told two of his men to walk in the way of the tunnel through which they knew at least one man had run.

"How did you ever find the secret panel to this underground tunnel?" Laura Reynolds wanted to know as they marched out.

"I'll tell you all about that when we're comfortable," Betty laughed. "And you've got a lot to tell me about where you've been these last five years and how you happened to be back here."

Laura Reynolds laughed.

"It's a long, long story, Betty," she said, "but I'll tell you all about it tonight."

The two prisoners marched ahead, their hands high.

Betty and Laura Reynolds followed arm and arm.

The two men who had been detailed to follow up the escaping man moved forward slowly. Neither of them knew the tunnel nor had any idea where it would lead them out.

Would the elusive man shoot in the dark? Would he escape them entirely? These were the questions that ran through their minds as they carried out the sheriff's orders to get their man.

On and on they walked until finally they saw faint rays of light sifting through ahead.

"Looks like we've been fooled," one of them said.

"Never can tell," put in the other, "this is an exit and the sheriff

thought he had all of them covered. If he came out any of the four we know about he walked right into the arms of the law."

The men were now ready to make their exit.

To their surprise they found themselves coming out directly in back of a gypsy tent.

The Chief of Police greeted them.

"He beat you out by about five minutes," the Chief said pointing to the gypsy leader. "And was *he* surprised."

The two men laughed.

"Did the sheriff get the others?" he asked.

"Yes, and Laura Reynolds is safe and so is Mr. Carter's money."

"Great work," the Chief added. "What are we to do now?"

"Better hold this man here while I go over and get the Sheriff. He'll want to take a look around."

The gypsy was sullen. Other members of the band had stopped their work. They had been preparing to break camp, ready to make a hurried departure.

"Better put your tents together again," the Chief told the gypsies, "you've got a lot of explaining to do before you leave these parts."

"You have nothing on us," the leader said.

"Nothing but two cases of kidnapping," laughed the Chief.

One of the men who had made the trip through the tunnel walked over to the Reynolds home.

He found Sheriff West and the others waiting.

"We caught the other man," he announced. "It was the gypsy leader and he came up right in the camp."

"That old cave has more exits than a movie house," Sheriff West said. "I'll go over and take a look around. You go over and see what the groups at the mouth of the cave, and back of the oak have uncovered," he ordered.

"If they haven't discovered anything tell them to report back here. You go over and see about the Saxon place."

Sheriff West walked over to the Gypsy camp accompanied by Betty and Laura Reynolds.

As they approached the old gypsy's jaw dropped.

"He's the man who did the actual kidnapping," Laura said pointing to the leader.

Sheriff West looked around.

"All of you get your stuff together, you're coming into town," he told the entire camp.

Then he went over and examined the exit. It had been carefully hidden by a big rock and then a tent had been pitched right next to it.

"Pretty clever," he mused, "but not clever enough to fool Betty Baker," he finished with a laugh.

The five men hurried the gypsies together while Sheriff West and the two girls walked back to the Reynolds house.

When they arrived there they found the posses from the other two entrances.

"No one came out our way," he was told.

Just then the men from the Saxon house came up. Between them was the crouched figure of the old miser.

"He tried to make a getaway, Sheriff," one of the men said: "We caught him ducking into a secret entrance in the floor of his cabin."

The sheriff scratched his head.

Old man Saxon looked at Betty through scowling eyes.

Then before the men realized it he had broken loose and made a desperate lunge at the young girl.

## CHAPTER X

### What Happened to Laura Reynolds

**B**UT the officers were too quick for the wiry old man.

"You're just getting yourself in deeper," Sheriff West told him, "and things are going to be pretty tough with you already."

The procession that moved into town that morning was more like a parade than anything else.

Crowds had gathered at the police station and newspapermen were shooting questions at Laura Reynolds and Betty.

"We'll dispose of this just as quickly as we can," Sheriff West told the girls, "but there are still a lot of questions to be cleared up, mostly concerning you, Miss Reynolds."

The two gangsters, old man Saxon and the entire gypsy band were herded into the station house.

"Now," began the Sheriff, "we'll hear Miss Reynolds' story. Then we'll see what you men have to say for yourselves."

Laura Reynolds stepped forward.

"That man," she began, pointing to the gypsy leader, "kidnapped me five years ago. He works for these men," she continued pointing to the two gangsters. "He does the actual kidnapping and they collect the ransom money. That's what they were after me for. They knew I had fifty thousand dollars in the bank and they tried to torture me into writing a note that would give them the money. When I refused they took me to some distant city. I don't know where it was. Every year they brought me back to the tunnel beneath my own house and attempted to get the money from me. They tried various kidnappings all over the country while they held me prisoner. This year when they brought me back they kidnapped the twins and collected the ten thousand dollars. They would have been gone days ago if it hadn't been for a quarrel. These two men tried to cheat the gypsy leader."

Laura Reynolds paused a moment.

"Old man Saxon," she said turning to him, "showed them the secret entrance into my house and the other secret passageways. They paid him well for it."

As Miss Reynolds finished Walter Carter rushed into the courtroom.

"What does this mean?" he asked.

"It means that we have found Laura Reynolds and caught the kid-nappers of the babies," Sheriff West told him. "And here's your ten thousand dollars. You can thank Betty Baker for its safe return."

Walter Carter was speechless. Then he rushed over and embraced Laura Reynolds, for she was an old friend of his.

"It's a miracle," he sighed. "Just think—you're back at last safe and sound."

"Yes, thanks to Betty here," Laura answered.

Walter Carter turned to the girl.

"As a detective," he said, "you're tops. The entire community is proud of you."

Sheriff West turned to Laura Reynolds.

"We won't need you any more today," he said. "I'll have to book all these people. You go and get some rest. I'll call you tomorrow."

Sheriff West thanked Betty and then Walter Carter, Laura Reynolds and Betty left the room.

"Your father will certainly be proud of you," Mr. Carter said as they walked down the steps.

Just then Martin Baker jumped out of a taxi.

"Betty, Betty," he shouted. "I've heard everything," he finished as he rushed into his girl's arms and held her up. "You're the greatest detective in all the world."

He stopped to look at Laura.

"And Laura Reynolds," he said softer. "We're so happy to see you safe and sound again. For a while it looked as though you were gone for good."

"I would have been," Miss Reynolds told him, "if it hadn't been for Betty."

They stopped in front of the curb and Walter Carter shook Betty's hand again.

"If I ever need a real detective, Judge Baker," he said, "I'm going to call your daughter."

The judge smiled proudly.

"Guess it runs in the family," he said, smiling.

Laura and Betty and her father got into Betty's car and pointed it towards the Baker home.

"You'll stay with us a few days," Judge Baker told her.

"That's all decided," Betty assured her father.

Laura Reynolds smiled as she breathed in the cool fresh autumn air.

"It's great to be alive again," she told them.

Aunt Martha and Mary ran to the car to meet them when they drove up.

"I've got more to tell you," Betty shouted. "Everything worked out just as I thought—and look who I brought back with me."



But Mary had not waited. She and Laura were in a tight embrace, for in the days before the kidnapping they had been close friends.

After a few tears of joy had been shed they all went into the house.

"And I'm famished," Betty announced. "How about a nice big luncheon, Aunt Martha?"

The old woman smiled affectionately.

"It's just about ready," she answered.

As Aunt Martha finished the shrill ring of the telephone was heard.

Judge Baker answered it.

Betty heard him say, "Yes, Sheriff, she's right here. Just a minute."

The judge turned to Betty.

"Call for Detective Baker," he announced with a smile.

Betty ran over to the phone.

"Yes, Sheriff," she said excitedly, "you say you've been checking the fingerprints with those of wanted criminals?"

There was a pause.

"Yes," she continued almost shouting, "and there's a thousand dollars reward for one of the gangsters?"

A shout of joy went up in the Baker home.

"And it's coming to me?" she finished. "Oh, thank you so much, Sheriff." Betty hung up and rushed over into her father's outstretched arms.

"A thousand dollars from the authorities," she shouted, "whoops!"

"And its coming to you, every cent of it," Judge Baker told her, "because you've solved a mystery that has baffled every police officer in the community for five years."

Betty's eyes seemed to be dancing.

"And of course I'll share the reward with Mary," she was saying. "Think how many nice things she can buy for the twins—and without Mary's aid I doubt if I'd ever solved the mystery."

The Judge smiled.

"You're a real detective Betty," he finished. "And your father is mighty proud of you."

THE END



*Tony tugged at the man's coat, making escape impossible.*

# THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING POLICE DOG

*Peggy Skinner finds her German Police dog mysteriously missing—then she makes an unexpected trip to New York and things begin to happen*

by

DOROTHY B. ABBOTT

“STOP Tony—you’ll spoil my new dress,” Peggy Skinner said laughingly as her handsome police dog greeted her on her return home from a neighborhood party.

“You’re a bad dog, anyway,” Peggy continued as Tony trotted along beside her. “Mrs. Darrow told me that you’ve been chasing her cat again and you know what that calls for.”

Tony’s tail curled between his legs. His eyes looked up at Peggy pleadingly.

“You know when you’ve done wrong, don’t you?” the young girl admonished good-naturedly. “You’re a mighty smart doggie.”

Peggy bounded up the front steps of her home and Tony stood watching, his tongue out, panting easily.

Tony was Peggy’s pride and joy. He was a handsome full-blooded police dog whose mother had been a prize show dog. He had been a gift to Peggy from her favorite uncle in New York when he was a puppy and Peggy had cared for him as she would care for a younger brother or sister. She had often said that she would be utterly lost without him for it was Tony who accompanied her on long walks into the country in the summer, and it was Tony who curled beside her in front of the big open fireplace on winter evenings when her mother and father were out visiting.

True it was that there were times when Tony had been into mischief such as Peggy had scolded him for a few minutes before, but for the most part his actions were perfect, and when he did break a rule it was a minor one.

"How did you enjoy the party?" Mrs. Skinner asked her daughter as Peggy entered the kitchen and embraced her mother.

"It was grand—everybody had a wonderful time," Peggy enthused. "We played cards and had the loveliest refreshments. Sally certainly knows how to arrange a party."

Peggy spoke of Sally Sheehan, her closest friend.

Mrs. Skinner smiled and continued to go about fixing dinner.

"I suppose you won't be very interested in dinner this evening," she said with a smile.

Peggy lifted the lid from a broiler on the stove.

"Mmm," she sighed, "broiled chicken—you bet I'm interested."

"Then you'd better get that dress off and be ready when your father comes home. He's due most any minute."

"I'll be ready," Peggy assured her, dashing from the kitchen and up the stairs to her second floor room.

Peggy Skinner was the only child of Harold Skinner, owner of the local newspaper, the *Hartsville Courier*. She was fourteen, with light chestnut hair, and a warm smile that had made her welcome in every home in Hartsville. There was something about her manner that made mothers proud to have their daughters in her company, and her teachers at school all agreed that she possessed one of the keenest minds in the history of Hartsville High School. Indeed, Peggy Skinner and her dog Tony were an essential part of the warm and friendly personality of the little city of Hartsville.

Ten minutes after Peggy had gone upstairs she heard footsteps on the front porch.

In a flash she was downstairs.

"Hello, Daddy," she shouted as she opened the door for her father, "how did things go at the office?"

"Just fine," Harold Skinner answered as he kissed his daughter on the forehead, "here's a copy of the paper with your write-up of Sally's party in it."

Peggy took the paper and curled herself into a chair to read her advance story of the afternoon's party while her father went into the kitchen and kissed Mrs. Skinner.

"Dinner's ready right now," Mrs. Skinner told them, "you can read that story after you eat," she said to Peggy.

"I've already read it," the girl answered getting up and starting for the table, "anyway it's only the announcement. Tomorrow I write the real story of the party, don't I, Daddy?"

Mr. Skinner smiled in the affirmative as he sat down to the table.

"That's right," he answered, "I'll make a reporter out of you yet."

Harold Skinner served the plates and all three set about enjoying a delightful chicken dinner.

"What's new in the paper beside the social events?" Mrs. Skinner wanted to know.

For the first time since Harold Skinner's return home he frowned. Peggy looked up at her father.

"Nothing bad I hope," she put in.

Mr. Skinner cleared his throat.

"Nothing except those mysterious disappearances of dogs," he told them. "It's the strangest thing I've ever heard of. Why, do you know that Felix Stadman's pedigreed Dachshund disappeared last night. I don't know what to make of it."

Harold Skinner paused.

Mrs. Skinner and Peggy listened intently for they knew that the unusual circumstances surrounding the disappearance of several of the city's finest pedigreed dogs had worried the authorities for weeks.

"If anybody steals Tony——" Peggy exclaimed, then stopped short at the mere thought of such a tragedy.

Mr. Skinner smiled weakly.

"I don't think there's any danger of that," he assured his daughter, "but just the same I'd keep a close eye on him for the next few weeks. He is a valuable dog and from all I can gather there can only be one answer to this situation."

Both Peggy and her mother waited anxiously.

"Chief Walsh says that somebody's stealing them and selling them."

There was a moment of silence.

"What brutes," Mrs. Skinner said, finally. "It would certainly take a low person to steal dogs for a living."

"Well, they better not try to steal Tony," Peggy was saying with unrestrained emphasis, "or I'll——"

Again Peggy stopped in the middle of a thought, unable to utter the words of contempt she had for people small enough to rob masters of their dogs for profit.

"Dogs bring a lot of money you know," Mr. Skinner continued as he helped himself to another piece of chicken, "people in the city who are totally unaware of the dogs being stolen are willing to pay high prices for thoroughbreds."

The remainder of the meal was finished in almost complete silence while all three thought of the horrible trade that was evidently being plied by someone right in their home town.

After a luscious dessert of fresh peach ice cream Peggy started to help her mother clear away the table.

Harold Skinner settled himself in an easy chair and lit his pipe.

Peggy and Mrs. Skinner discussed the mysterious disappearances as they washed the dishes.

They were almost finished before Peggy stopped short.

"Why, mother," she laughed, "I'm so interested in this mystery that I've forgotten to give Tony his dinner."

Mrs. Skinner smiled as Peggy prepared a plate for Tony.

"It's a wonder he's not at the back door scratching the screen," Mrs. Skinner said to Peggy.

"I guess that's because I scolded him for chasing Mrs. Darrow's cat," Peggy reasoned, "he always waits to be called after he has been scolded."

Peggy had finished fixing Tony's plate.

"This'll please him a lot," she enthused, "he'll know I've forgiven him."

The smiling girl went to the kitchen door and opened it.

"Here, Tony, here Tony," she called.

But instead of the quick patter, patter of feet against the earth which Peggy was used to there was only silence.

"Here, Tony boy, here, Tony," she continued, advancing into the yard and raising her voice.

Still there was only silence.

"This isn't right at all," she told herself, "Tony has never acted like this before."

Peggy quickened her steps towards the little house in the corner of the yard over which a sign reading TONY hung.

It was a moonless night and Peggy could not distinguish the house until she was very close to it.

"That's strange," she told herself, "he's never done this before."

Peggy bent over and looked into the dog-house.

There was no sign of Tony.

Just at that moment a strange feeling came over the young girl.

"Could it be possible," she asked herself, "that Tony had met the same fate as the other Hartsville dogs?"

"Tony! Tony!" she shouted at the top of her voice.

As her words died in the evening silence Peggy Skinner stood frozen in her steps.

There was a rustle in the underbrush in the background. Then she heard heavy footsteps break into a run.

Peggy dropped the plate that held the dinner intended for Tony and raced back to the house.

"Daddy, Daddy," she shouted, "someone's stolen Tony!"

Harold Skinner was out of the house in a flash.

"I heard footsteps running in that direction," Peggy told her father.

Together they dashed forward, hoping against hope to overtake the elusive person Peggy had heard.

But search as they would their efforts were futile.

"Guess he made his getaway," Harold Skinner sighed as he returned to the dog-house several minutes later.

Peggy was examining her little friend's home.

"I can't understand why Tony didn't bark or something," she was saying. "I know he's awfully friendly but I hardly believe he'd allow himself to be lured away by a stranger."

Mr. Skinner shook his head.

"Well, there's nothing we can do about it," he added, "and from the looks of things it doesn't look like the police can do much either."

Peggy tucked her arm in her father's as they walked back to the house.

"I'll report the incident to Chief Walsh the first thing in the morning," Mr. Skinner assured his daughter.

Inside the house they explained what had happened to Mrs. Skinner.

"And Tony was being stolen right while we were talking about the other disappearances," the elderly woman sighed.

Peggy curled herself in an easy chair.

"You know, Daddy," she was saying, "I don't believe Tony was stolen by a stranger. I think it must have been someone he knew and trusted."

Harold Skinner looked at his daughter in admiration.

"That sounds reasonable enough," he agreed. "Yes, if someone Tony trusted lured him away that would account for the absence of any barking."

"Sounds like we've got a detective with us," Mrs. Skinner smiled. "That's mighty good reasoning."

"It's better than any of the authorities have been able to do," added Mr. Skinner.

That night after Peggy had retired to her room she lay thinking about the circumstances surrounding the strange disappearances of the finest dogs in the community.

"Who could be so mean?" she asked herself. "Who is there in town who is clever enough to make dogs like him only to use that confidence to lure them away?"

Peggy Skinner went to sleep that night with the unanswerable question turning over and over in her mind.

Mr. Skinner spoke at the breakfast table the next morning.

"I'll stop by and see Chief Walsh on my way to the office," he said, "and I'll tell him what you said about some person known to the dogs luring them away."

"May I go with you, Daddy?" Peggy asked anxiously. "I have a feeling that I'm going to be able to help solve this case."

Harold Skinner smiled.

"Of course you can," he told her. "Let's be on our way."

Peggy jumped up from the table and, kissing her mother goodbye, followed her father out of the front door.

The police station was only a five minutes' ride in Mr. Skinner's touring car.

Chief Walsh was just driving up as Mr. Skinner arrived.

"Mornin' Harold," the police officer greeted them, "and what's Peggy doing out so early this morning?"

Peggy Skinner was out of the car before her father.

"Somebody stole Tony last night," she exclaimed.

The Chief was startled. He had known the handsome police dog since Peggy had received it from her uncle.

"Why this is terrible," he said as he got out of his car, "are you sure?"

"We're sure all right," Mr. Skinner told the Chief, "Peggy heard a man making his getaway."

When the three were inside the station house Peggy and her father outlined the events of the previous evening in detail for the officer.

When they had finished he shook his head doubtfully.

"Beats anything I've ever seen," he said. "I've been on the force here twenty years and it's the most baffling case I've ever tackled."

He turned to Peggy.

"Your theory about some trusted person whom the dogs knew is the first real sound bit of thinking that has come out of the entire case."

"Have you any idea who it could possibly be?" Peggy asked anxiously.

The Chief was puzzled.

"Not right off hand," he answered finally, "but I'm going to give it some mighty serious thought."

Mr. Skinner looked at his watch.

"I've got to run along to the office," he told them. "You can stay and talk with the Chief if you want to," he said to Peggy.

"I'd like for her to," Chief Walsh assured Mr. Skinner. "It looks like maybe I could learn something from her."

Peggy smiled and watched her father shake hands with the officer and depart.

"After I was in bed last night I got to turning all of the events over in my mind," she said when they were alone, "and there's only one person I can think of who would possibly be a suspect."

Chief Walsh frowned.

"And who could that be?" he asked seriously.

"I don't like to accuse anyone wrongly," she started, "but I've never liked the looks of Joe Gilliam."



Chief Walsh smiled.

"Why, Joe Gilliam's all right. What makes you think he could possibly have anything to do with this case?"

Peggy hesitated, then spoke slowly and surely.

"Didn't he used to be a tailor?" she asked.

"Why, yes, he was a tailor until just last year," Chief Walsh answered, "but what could that possibly have to do with the case?"

"And then he started in that delivery business?" she asked.

"That's right."

"Then isn't it a little strange that a man should give up one business for an inferior one?"

Chief Walsh's face was serious.

"There's something to what you say," he agreed, "but I still don't see where you fit this all together."

Peggy continued.

"I never liked Joe Gilliam because he was never kind to children," she was saying, "then I noticed when he took over the delivery business he suddenly became very friendly with animals. At first I thought he had reformed but when I saw him being gruff and cross to children I couldn't understand it at all."

"You're certainly observant," he told her.

"Well, when the dogs began to disappear I thought of Gilliam; then I laughed it off thinking I was wrong. But recently I've noticed that he was especially nice to Tony and I wondered why."

As Peggy finished Chief Walsh rose.

"You've been a great help, Peggy," he told her, "and you may be sure we will look into everything you have said. It certainly sounds more reasonable than anything I've been able to figure out myself."

Peggy got up, shook hands with the officer and promised to let him know of any further developments in the case.

"We'll keep in touch," the police officer told her, "and maybe together we can put an end to this outrage."

Peggy Skinner walked out of the station house and turned her steps homeward.

As she crossed the main intersection she came face to face with the man about whom she had been talking—Joe Gilliam.

Where the ex-tailor had once been cool he was now over-friendly in his greeting as they passed.

"I don't like that man's actions," Peggy said to herself, "but I certainly can't prove anything on the evidence I have."

Back home Mrs. Skinner met Peggy at the door.

"Everything isn't bad news," her mother was saying. "I just got a letter from your Aunt Dorothy in New York and she wants you to visit her over this week-end."

Peggy was overjoyed.

"I always did like Aunt Dorothy," she laughed, "and I've always wanted to visit her in New York."

"Would you like to leave today?" her mother asked slyly.

"You bet I would," Peggy answered.

"Well that's what Dorothy suggested. She wants you to take the noon train. That will put you in Grand Central Station at three-thirty. I'll wire her to meet you."

For the present Peggy had forgotten all about Tony's disappearance. The very thought of a trip to New York filled the young girl's mind with delight. Aunt Dorothy was Mrs. Robert Dunning, wife of one of New York's most prominent attorneys, and she had always shown a partiality for Peggy.

"I've got most of your things packed," her mother told her, "you just look the things over and see whether there's anything else you'll need."

Peggy Skinner bounded up the stairs only to return a few minutes later.

"Everything's there mother and you're a peach," she said as she threw her arms about her mother's neck, "does Daddy know about it?"

"I haven't told him yet; but I know it will be all right," Mrs. Skinner said, "you get yourself a bite to eat and I'll telephone your father. He's been saying you needed a little outing anyway."

The next half hour was one of intense excitement for Peggy, for she had to have lunch, see that she had not forgotten anything, and make the train.

It was not until she was about to leave that the thought of Tony returned to her.

"You'll let me know the moment you hear anything about Tony won't you, mother?" she asked anxiously.

"I'll wire you if anything happens," Mrs. Skinner assured her.

Mrs. Skinner had called a cab and now it was waiting.

"Have a good time," she told her daughter, "and be sure to give my love to Dorothy."

The young girl kissed her mother and was away.

Thoughts of New York and Aunt Dorothy filled the girl's mind as she was whisked away to the station, then boarded the train and settled herself comfortably in a Pullman car.

Then it was that she started to think about Tony again.

"I can't help worrying," she mused, "Men who are low enough to steal dogs certainly wouldn't know how to treat them."

A genial conductor beamed over her, punched her ticket and proceeded on down the aisle.

"What if they are not feeding him right?" she asked herself, "and

worse yet what if they are mistreating him?"

Peggy shuddered at the very thought.

"I wonder if they have to keep the dogs covered up so they can hardly breathe, so that they won't be noticed and suspected?"

The happy thoughts of a New York adventure were eclipsed by the horrible possibilities that could happen to Tony.

"Well, there's nothing much I can do about it," she concluded, "I just hope Chief Walsh can do something with the theories I gave him on Joe Gilliam."

Peggy stopped a magazine salesman and bought a copy of a movie magazine in order to turn her mind from thoughts of Tony.

The noonday sun cast a warm glow over the countryside outside the Pullman window.

In spite of unpleasant thoughts Peggy enjoyed the train ride immensely and soon the cars were entering Manhattan.

"Aunt Dorothy is sure my favorite aunt," Peggy said to herself as she stood up and took her bag from the rack above her head.

The young girl did not need a porter for her light bag so she walked swiftly out of the pullman and onto the long platform.

"Now for my first glimpse of New York," she was saying.

Suddenly she recognized a familiar figure walking in front of her. Peggy slowed her pace.

"Can that be Joe Gilliam?" she asked herself.

The man she suspected of being the ex-tailor and present delivery man was walking ahead of her so that although she could study his features he could not see her unless he turned completely around.

"Yes, that's who it is," Peggy concluded as she almost came to a stop allowing several people to go ahead of her and thereby making it almost impossible for the man to see her even if he did glance backward.

But fate was kind to Peggy and soon the man disappeared through the main gateway and was lost in the crowd.

Peggy resumed her normal pace.

"I wonder what this trip to New York can mean?" she asked herself.

But her train of thought was broken when she saw the smiling face of her Aunt Dorothy beaming in front of her.

"Why, Peggy, I'm so happy you could come," the Aunt was saying.

"And I'm so happy to be here," the girl assured her Aunt as the two embraced.

"I have the car parked outside," Aunt Dorothy said, "your Uncle Bob was called away on a business trip and we'll have the entire weekend to ourselves."

Peggy's eyes feasted on the magnificence of the mammoth station.

"If the rest of New York is like this I'm going to be thrilled every minute I'm here," she exclaimed.

"We'll see the town from the Battery to the Bronx," Mrs. Dunning told Peggy as they stepped into her sedan.

"You live right on Central Park don't you Aunt Dorothy?" Peggy questioned.

"Yes, and it's only a short drive from here," was the answer.

As the luxurious sedan sped through the wide streets Peggy saw the smart shop windows of the Fifth Avenue stores for the first time. Then the car turned into the park.

"This is Central Park," Mrs. Dunning told Peggy, "we have a short drive through it and then we're home."

"No one would mind a long drive through this park," Peggy said happily, "this is beautiful."

Aunt Dorothy was impressed with Peggy's obvious pleasure.

Soon they were out of the park and easing up in front of a tall modern apartment house.

"This is it," Mrs. Dunning smiled as the car came to a stop.

A doorman in full uniform opened the door.

"Good morning, Mrs. Dunning," he said politely.

The two women got out of the car. The doorman took Peggy's bag.

"See that the car is put away, William," the woman told him.

Inside the doorman placed the bag in the elevator and assured Mrs. Dunning that the car would be sent to the garage.

Up and up the elevator went until Peggy looked at her aunt questioningly.

Mrs. Dunning smiled.

"We live on the very top floor," she said, "we call them penthouses in New York."

"A penthouse?" Peggy sighed, "I've heard a lot about them but I've never seen one."

The elevator came to a stop and Mrs. Dunning and Peggy got out.

The former unlocked the door and they entered a spacious room furnished in smart, modern furniture.

"This is the most beautiful room I have ever seen," the girl exclaimed.

In front of her she saw a large open door and beyond that a terrace. Peggy walked over and stepped out on the terrace.

Aunt Dorothy followed.

From this position Peggy could see the park below, the beautiful buildings of Fifth Avenue across the way, and all about the city.

"I never dreamed I'd be so thrilled," Peggy told her aunt.

Mrs. Dunning smiled.

"You've got a lot of thrills coming," the woman assured her.

Aunt Dorothy and Peggy walked back into the living room with their arms about each other.

"Would you like to see some of the smart shops this afternoon?" the elder woman asked, "you know they'll be closed tomorrow because it's Sunday."

"I'd love to," Peggy enthused.

"I'll call a cab then," Mrs. Dunning said as she walked to the house telephone. "It's handier than taking our car along."

After Peggy and her aunt had powdered their noses they were off again, this time on a pleasure trip.

The short ride through the park was soon completed and Mrs. Dunning ordered the driver to stop at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Fifty-seventh Street.

"We'll walk down and do a little window shopping," she suggested.

Peggy had never been so thrilled in all of her life. The luxurious shop windows, the smartly dressed women on the avenue, and the general elegance of New York's most beautiful street caused the young girl to gasp in amazement.

"Let's walk over to Addison Avenue," Mrs. Dunning suggested when they reached Fiftieth Street, "there are some nice little shops over there that I'm sure you'd like."

Peggy was open to any suggestions.

"There are so many things to see that I'm surprised you know where to start," she told her Aunt.

On Addison Avenue the women paused in front of the various windows while they both admired the smart articles on display.

After they had walked several blocks Peggy's eyes caught sight of a pet shop. The windows were filled with cute Scotties and Terriers. Thoughts of Tony rushed back into Peggy's mind.

"I forgot to tell you, Aunt Dorothy," she began, "Tony disappeared yesterday."

Mrs. Dunning looked at the girl perplexed. It had been her husband who had presented Peggy with Tony as a tiny puppy. This news came as a distinct shock.

"But Peggy," she asked as they stood in front of the pet shop windows, "what do you think could have happened to him?"

The young girl hesitated a moment.

"We think someone is stealing pedigreed dogs and selling them for profit," she said finally, "and I've a suspicion who it is."

Mrs. Dunning was anxious to help in any way she could.

"I talked with the Chief of Police," Peggy continued, "and I told him I suspected a man named Gilliam—and just this afternoon when I got off the train I saw him walking ahead of me here in New York."

"Did he see you?" Mrs. Dunning wanted to know.

"I'm sure he didn't," Peggy answered, "but I'd certainly like to know why he's here in this city."

"Do you think it possible that he brought Tony here to sell him?" her Aunt questioned.

"That's just what I think," the girl answered seriously, "and I wouldn't be surprised to find Tony right in one of these pet shops."

Mrs. Dunning agreed with her niece's reasoning.

"I've heard of such things," she answered, "let's take a look inside this shop and see what we can learn."

Peggy led the way into the shop.

All about them they saw fine canines, pups, and full grown animals.

The two women pretended to be interested in making a purchase.

"We're interested in a German police dog," Peggy said as a friendly salesman approached.

The man looked about him.

"I'm afraid we haven't any right now," he answered, "wouldn't you be interested in any other type of dog?"

Mrs. Dunning and Peggy were just about to leave when another man who had evidently overheard the request came forward.

"I am the manager," he began, "did you ladies say you wanted to see a German police dog?" he asked politely.

Peggy answered in the affirmative.

The man smiled warmly.

"We've just gotten one in," he told them, "one of the finest dogs I have ever seen. Would you care to see him?"

Mrs. Dunning looked at Peggy.

"Why, yes, we would," the elder lady answered.

"Just follow me," the man suggested.

The two women walked through a narrow passageway and entered a large rear room filled with dogs of all descriptions.

As Peggy entered there was a loud, familiar bark.

A beautiful German police dog lunged forward to greet her, only to be stopped short by the leash that held him fast to the wall.

Peggy Skinner leaped forward.

"*Why, it's Tony,*" she exclaimed in surprise.

The manager looked on in bewilderment.

"What do you mean?" he asked, "do you know this dog?"

"Does she know him?" Mrs. Dunning laughed, "*it's her own dog.*"

Peggy Skinner bent over and drew Tony into her arms.

The handsome dog jerked about in nervous happiness as Peggy streaked his long hair.

The store manager could hardly speak.

"Why," he began, "we just bought him from a trusted man."

Peggy stood upright.

"Well you can see for yourself that he knows me," she told him. "Just who was this man you bought him from?"

"The man's name is Gilliam—and I have bought many fine dogs from him in the past," was the answer.

"And they were all stolen dogs," Peggy told the man. "This one was stolen no later than yesterday."

The man was all action.

"I will notify the police at once," he was saying. "I was never so humiliated in all of my life. If this is true I have been selling stolen dogs for the last year."

"Is that how long you have been doing business with Gilliam?" she asked.

"Yes, just about a year," the proprietor answered.

"Did he bring in a Dachshund several days ago?" Peggy asked.

"Why yes," the man said. "A fine little fellow. Was he stolen too?"

The man was beginning to sense the entire situation, was beginning to realize that Peggy was telling the whole truth.

"That was a Mr. Stadman's dog right in my home town," the girl told him.

"I believe everything you say," the man answered. "You can take your dog with you and I'll notify the police and try to trace this Gilliam man at once."

As the man spoke he untied Tony and the large animal jumped up to Peggy.

"Have you any idea where the man is staying?" Mrs. Dunning asked.

"He always gives his address as the Ritzmore Hotel. I'll get to work on the case at once.

"I am Mrs. Robert Dunning," Peggy's Aunt was saying. "My husband is an attorney and we live at the Park View Apartments on Central Park. If you hear anything let us know about it there at once."

The man thanked the women profusely and followed them to the door.

"I'll call you as soon as anything develops," he assured them. "I am as anxious to have this culprit punished as you are. I have an old established shop here and to think that I have been selling stolen dogs makes me very unhappy indeed."

The two women departed, Peggy holding Tony on his leash.

"He doesn't seem to have been too mistreated," Mrs. Dunning said as they walked up Addison Avenue, "yet you never can tell."

Peggy was elated at the return of Tony.

"Let's take a walk in the park and give Tony a chance to romp

a bit," she suggested. "I know he must have been cooped up in a stuffy box somewhere."

Mrs. Dunning thought this was a good idea and together they turned their steps to Central Park.

They entered the park at the Fifth Avenue and Fifty-ninth Street entrance.

Peggy allowed Tony to run free and soon he was romping about on the cool green grass.

"I'll bet Joe Gilliam had better never try to be friendly with Tony again," Mrs. Dunning smiled.

Peggy could not help being serious.

"If I can locate him," she answered, "it's going to be a long time before he has an opportunity to be friendly to anybody's dog again."

Mrs. Dunning and Peggy enjoyed the late afternoon stroll through the park and started homeward.

At one point they stopped to admire the statue of a dog erected in honor of the brave dogs that carried the serum to Nome some years back.

They were some distance behind Tony who ran and romped merrily in the grass and underbrush.

Suddenly Peggy saw him stop.

She looked ahead and there in front of them was the back of the man she had seen getting off the train—Joe Gilliam.

Tony had crouched low. Now he sprang forward, knocking the man to the ground.

Peggy's mind worked with trip-hammer speed.

"*Police! Police!*" she shouted.

Mrs. Dunning raised her hand to her mouth in amazement at what she saw.

Joe Gilliam had gotten up but Tony was tugging angrily at his coat, making the man's efforts to break away and run impossible.

In less than a minute a uniformed policeman dashed up to the scene.

"What's the matter here?" he demanded.

"Arrest that man," Peggy told him. "He's a dog thief."

At the same time she spoke the officer moved over to Joe Gilliam. Peggy grabbed Tony by the leash and pulled him away.

The officer grasped Gilliam's coat collar firmly.

"I'm Mrs. Robert Dunning," the girl's aunt told the officer, "and this is my niece. What she says is true. This man steals dogs and sells them to pet shops. Both myself and my husband, as well as my niece, will testify against him."

The officer was convinced.

Joe Gilliam winced.



"I'm innocent, officer," he protested. "You can't do this to me."

The officer smiled knowingly.

"We'll see about this," he answered, "you come along with me and see what the judge has to say about this."

The officer turned to Mrs. Dunning.

"You'll have to come along and swear out a complaint against this man," he told her.

The woman nodded affirmatively.

"We'll follow you to the station in a cab," she told him.

Tony was still trying to break away and dash at the man but Peggy held him tight on the leash.

"You're about the best detective I've ever seen," Mrs. Dunning said to Peggy as she summoned a cab. "I wouldn't want to try to get away from you and Tony."

Peggy smiled happily.

"Let's stop by a telegraph station and wire mother and father," she said. "They'll be glad to know that Tony has been returned safely and that my theory about Joe Gilliam was right."

Mrs. Dunning was in agreement.

At the telegraph office Peggy wrote:

DISCOVERED TONY IN NEW YORK PET SHOP  
SAFE AND WELL STOP CAPTURED JOE GIL-  
LIAM IN CENTRAL PARK WITH TONY'S HELP  
STOP HAVING AN EXCITING TIME STOP AUNT  
DOROTHY SENDS LOVE STOP SEE YOU MON-  
DAY STOP LOVE. PEGGY.

THE END



*The man's eyes seemed to be bursting from his head, his hand extended menacingly.*

# THE MAN ABOVE SUSPICION

*Mystery in a girls' camp—and a piece of brilliant detective work by Sally Stone who knew that memories can be "too perfect"*

by

MARGARET R. SHERWIN

“IT’S been a month now and the authorities haven’t been able to do a thing about the camp robbery.”

It was Miss Mary Prague who spoke in futile tones; and it was Miss Martha Kant who listened. Miss Prague was the head of Camp Dowagiac, a picturesque summer camp for girls located in the beautiful White Mountains district. Miss Kant was her chief assistant.

“It’s certainly a shame,” Miss Kant added, “the summer is over and we are going to be hearing a lot from the girl’s parents unless we are able to give some satisfaction.”

Miss Prague shook her head sadly.

“There were some mighty valuable things stolen and if we have to replace them we won’t have a thing to show for our summer’s work.”

For a few minutes the two women were silent.

It was Miss Kant who broke the silence.

“You know,” she was saying, “there are times when I’m sorry we didn’t allow the Stone girl to carry out her ideas on how to solve the robbery. Since she volunteered to help I’ve noticed that she is a particularly bright young woman.”

“But at first we had the utmost confidence in the authorities,” protested Miss Prague.

“Yes, that’s true,” the other woman answered. “But now——”

She stopped short as she looked at Miss Prague pleadingly.

“Why not let her try,” she continued. “It can’t do any harm.”

The robbery the two heads of the camp were discussing had been the only blot on an otherwise perfect summer at Camp Dowagiac. It had all happened right in the middle of the summer when things were

running along smoothly. Then some thief or group of thieves swooped down on the camp under the cover of darkness and stole many valuable articles from the resident girls. The authorities had been notified promptly and a number of suspects had been rounded up but no definite clue had ever been uncovered and no one had been held over a few hours.

"Most of the suspects were natives around here, weren't they?" Miss Prague asked.

"Yes," answered Miss Kant, "and I'm sure one of them was guilty if we could only get some small bit of evidence to prove exactly who it was."

Miss Prague was in deep thought.

"Do you know where Sally Stone is now?" she asked half hesitantly.

"I think I could find her quite easily," Miss Kant replied in tones that made it quite obvious she was anxious to have the girl explain her theory.

"Bring her in," Miss Prague ordered. "I'd like to talk with her."

Without waiting to say a word in reply, Miss Kant rushed out of the room in search of Sally Stone.

Sally was the daughter of a New Hampshire attorney, whose brilliant legal mind had carried him far in Eastern circles. She had had the advantage of discussing many cases with her father and often on winter nights they sat before the open fireplace in their city home while he recalled interesting cases he had handled in his varied career as an attorney.

The young girl had taken a keen interest in the cases and often made suggestions to her father that proved beneficial in the end.

Shortly after the camp robbery Sally had asked permission to talk with the authorities and present a method of procedure which might solve the case. But Miss Prague had thought it best to allow the local police to handle the case in their own way. Now that their efforts had failed to bring results she was willing to give the girl a hearing.

"Parents often object to their daughters being brought into cases such as this one," Miss Prague had reasoned, "but I guess the daughter of an attorney is used to hearing about all kinds of people in trouble."

It took Miss Kant but a few minutes to locate Sally.

The young girl was resting beneath a large tree, with a current magazine in her hand.

"Miss Prague wants to see you, Sally," the woman announced. "I think she's finally convinced that she should let you try your hand at solving the camp robbery."

Sally Stone looked up happily.

"That's good news," she answered, standing up and tucking her book beneath her arm. "I've given that case a lot of thought and I'm willing to bet that I can be of real help—if Miss Prague will let me."

The two women discussed the mystery as they walked to the camp office.

"Have you any definite plan?" Miss Kant asked.

"Miss Prague will first have to let me talk with the local authorities," she answered, "then I will be able to tell exactly how much help I can be on the case."

As the two women entered the main office, Miss Prague stood up and greeted Sally with a smile.

"I'm convinced at last that you should give us what aid you can in solving this robbery," she told the young girl. "I hate to bring you into it, but I wouldn't consider it fair to the rest of the girls to leave any stone unturned."

Sally smiled.

"First I'll have to talk with the local authorities who worked on the case," Sally was saying.

"I'll get Sheriff Waters right over," Miss Prague assured Sally.

A messenger was dispatched to go into the neighboring town and ask the officer to hurry out to the camp.

While the women waited Sally outlined her thoughts to Miss Prague.

"If the sheriff has any definite suspects I want to question all of them," she told the head of the camp. "My entire theory is based on those interviews."

"You can do whatever you wish, Sally," the woman agreed, "only I want you to avoid getting into any danger yourself."

"Don't worry about that," Sally laughed. "I'm a very careful girl."

When the sheriff arrived he was introduced to Sally.

"This is Miss Stone, Sally Stone," Miss Prague told the officer. "You've doubtless heard of her father, Malcom Stone."

The officer nodded in the affirmative.

"Sally wanted to talk to you about this case before," Miss Prague said, "but I didn't want any of the girls to be endangered. However, I think Sally is a thoroughly cautious girl and whatever she wants to suggest is all right with me."

The Sheriff smiled good-naturedly.

"Any help you can be, Miss Stone," he said, "will be appreciated. We don't seem to be able to solve the case."

Sally looked at the officer.

"Have you any definite suspects?" she asked.

"Yes," replied the Sheriff, "that's the trouble. We have any number of people who might have committed such a crime, but we can't get enough evidence on any one of them to even search their homes."

Sally seemed pleased.

"About how many of them are there?" she wanted to know.

The Sheriff paused a moment in reflection before he spoke.

"About ten, I think," he answered.

"Can you get them all together for questioning tomorrow?"

The Sheriff was amused.

"Why, yes," he answered, "that will be easy enough."

Miss Prague interrupted.

"Do you want to question them all, Sally?" she asked.

"Yes," the girl replied, "that's what I'd like to do."

The Sheriff nodded to Miss Prague.

"It's all right with me if it's all right with you," he said.

Miss Prague agreed.

"Is that all?" the man asked. "If it is I'll be on my way to round up those I have any suspicion about. They don't dare refuse to be questioned."

Sally shook hands with the officer and assured him that she would be on hand the next afternoon at two for the questioning.

As the officer left, Sally turned to the two women.

"If my theory works out," she told them, "I'll have the mystery cleared up by tomorrow evening."

The women were puzzled, but they were willing to give Sally full rein and allow her to carry out her ideas.

That night Sally thought her entire plan out carefully.

"I'll question every one separately," she told herself, "and if I know anything about the case I'll be able to point my finger right at the guilty party."

The next morning was spent in the usual camp routine and it was not until after lunch that Sally went in to see Miss Prague.

"Is it all right for me to leave now?" she asked.

"Perfectly all right," Miss Prague told her. "I'll have you driven into town."

But when Miss Prague summoned aid she was told that all of the cars were in use.

"Wouldn't it be just like that?" she exclaimed. "I hate the thought of your going into town alone."

Sally smiled confidently.

"There can be no harm," she assured Miss Prague. "I'll go in just as I have any number of times. Besides, no one suspects that I'm interested in this case."

Miss Prague was impressed by the girl's confidence and granted her permission to start at once.

"I'll be awfully anxious to know how it all works out," she smiled as Sally departed.

"You'll be the first one I tell when I get back to camp," Sally said as she walked through the door and disappeared.

Sally waved goodbye to several of the girls as she passed on to the road leading into town.

It was a distance of some two miles through a wooded section, so Sally cautiously walked in the center of the road.

She was about to enter the city limits when she suddenly became aware of someone following her.

Instinctively she looked over her shoulder. Then she broke into a run.

There she saw a smoothly dressed man, his eyes seemingly bursting out of his head, his hand extended menacingly.

But Sally Stone was no weakling.

And the man soon found out that he was no match for her as far as running went.

Sally dashed madly ahead.

Soon she was within sight of a house.

When she turned and looked behind her she found that she was alone.

"Gee," she breathed, "that *was* a close call. I wonder who could know what my mission to town is?"

The Sheriff's office was only a short distance away now and Sally walked along briskly, confidently.

"It begins to look as though the real guilty party is not being called in by the sheriff," she mused. "Certainly that fellow meant no good and they should all be in the sheriff's office by now."

Sally entered the headquarters just as the town clock struck two.

Sheriff Waters escorted her through a room filled with men and women.

"I had a close call," Sally told the officer when they were alone.

And then she recounted her experience while walking to town.

"That's queer," he told her. "I've rounded up everyone I had the least suspicion of—but that puts a different light on things."

Sally was worried for the first time.

"But we'll question these people anyway," she decided. "Maybe I'm not altogether wrong."

One by one the sheriff led the suspects into the office where Sally sat behind a big desk.

Before starting the questioning Sally told Sheriff Waters to hold all of the people until she had finished questioning every one separately.

As the young girl spoke with each person individually she seemed interested in but one point. The point was exactly what that person did on the night of the robbery.

There were ten suspects.

To each one Sally put the question:

"*What did you do on the night of the robbery—August 1st?*"

Each one thought at length and then told to the best of his or her ability what they had done on the night one month before.

Nine of the suspects were hesitant and nine were unable to give the exact details of what had occurred on the night of August 1st.

The tenth was a well dressed fellow named John Bradley.

He did not falter.

When Sally put the question to him he started right in and told in detail every action he made on the night of the robbery one month previously.

The girl listened and thanked him when he had finished.

John Bradley left the room confident that he was above suspicion.

As Sally dismissed the tenth suspect she summoned the sheriff.

"Arrest John Bradley," she told the officer. "He's the man who robbed our camp."

Sheriff Waters was surprised.

"But why?" he demanded to know. "What evidence have we?"

"When you search his home you will find the girl's property," Sally assured the sheriff, "*for he is the only man who remembers every detail of what he did on the night of the robbery.*"

Sheriff Waters' eyes lit up. He was beginning to understand.

"You mean that Bradley's alibi is too good?" he asked.

"That's it exactly," Sally told him, "but I still don't understand about that man who tried to trap me as I walked to town."

"I think I can explain that," Waters told her. "John Bradley has a brother Murray. They are always together. It must have been Murray who tried to frighten you away from here today."

The explanation was logical.

Sheriff Waters turned and left the room.

Outside he walked over to John Bradley.

"You're under arrest," he told the dapper man. "The others of you are dismissed."

Nine suspects smiled, thanked the sheriff and departed.

John Bradley was first surprised, then surly.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded. "I'm an innocent man. I have a sound alibi."

Sheriff Waters smiled.

"We'll see about that when we search your house," he said.

Sally Stone had come into the room.

"I'll have a deputy escort you back to the camp," Sheriff Waters told her, "and if this works out the way you say it will, this will be the most amazing piece of detective work I have ever seen."

Sally smiled.

"It'll work out," she said as she left.

Sheriff Waters led a stubborn John Bradley to his home.



"Somebody's going to pay for this," Bradley protested.

But when Sheriff Waters arrived and instigated a search he found things just as Sally had predicted. The Bradley house was filled with articles belonging to the girls at Camp Dowagiac.

Sheriff Waters placed handcuffs on John Bradley.

Just as they were leaving the house Murray Bradley came up.

"You'd better come along, too," Waters told the second man as he reached out for him. "You didn't frighten Sally Stone away from my office and she put the finger right on you."

Murray Bradley knew that the game was up.

He walked along, handcuffed to his brother.

Sally Stone was sitting in the office explaining her theory to Miss Prague and Miss Kant when the telephone rang.

"It's Sheriff Waters," Miss Prague announced after answering it. She smiled at Sally.

"You say Sally was 100 per cent right?" she was saying, "and that you have recovered the girls' belongings and arrested Murray and John Bradley? Why, that's the most amazing case I've ever heard about."

"It's positively detective genius," put in Miss Kant.

Miss Prague put the telephone receiver down.

She was anxious to hear exactly how Sally had solved the baffling mystery.

"That's easy," answered Sally. "Father always told me that a guilty man tries to get up a perfect alibi. I reasoned that not one of the suspects could remember offhand exactly what they had done on the night of August 1st. So when John Bradley was the only one who did remember exactly what he did on that night I knew he was the guilty man."

"Amazing," enthused Miss Kant.

"Why, we've got a real master detective right here in our camp. Wait until the girls hear about it," Miss Prague exclaimed.

Sally Stone laughed.

"Father will be tickled, too," she said.

WHAT DO YOU THINK  
ABOUT  
**GIRL'S DETECTIVE  
MYSTERIES?**

**W**HEN we first issued *BOY'S ADVENTURE MAGAZINE* we offered prizes for the best letters of criticism from boys all over the country telling exactly what they thought of *their* new magazine. The letters we have received so far have been a great help—so now we want to start *GIRL'S DETECTIVE MYSTERIES* out on the right foot too!

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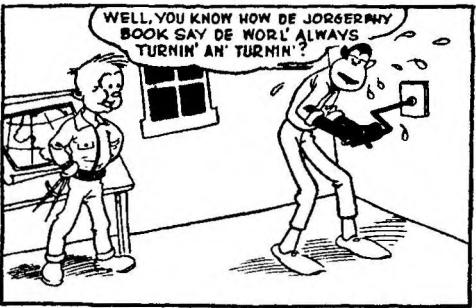
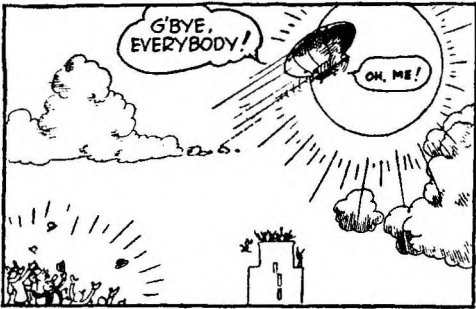
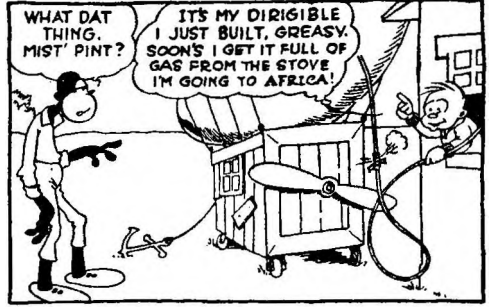
**GIRL'S DETECTIVE MYSTERIES**

**480 Lexington Avenue**

**New York City**

# PINT and GREASY

By BILL ELKINS.



# Jests and Jokes

He: "Listen, Angel mine, I wish you wouldn't paint."

She: "Did you ever see an angel that wasn't painted?"

---

Professor: "What was the president's name in 1916?"

Smart Guy: "Wilson."

Professor: "The joke's on you! It was Roosevelt."

---

Surgeon: "I've been treating men for years and have never had one complaint. What does that prove?"

Student: "Dead men tell no tales."

---

"Why is it, Sambo, that one never hears of a Negro committing suicide?" inquired a visitor to the South.

"Well, you see, it's dis way, boss—when a white pusson gets into trouble he sits down and starts thinkin' about it, and a-worryin'. Then the first thing ya knows he's done gone an' killed himself. But when a Negro sets down to think 'bout his troubles, why, he jest nacherly goes to sleep."

---

Wife: "I just came back from the beauty shop."

Husband (looking up): "You didn't get waited on, did you?"

---

Little Mary (to guest): "Did you like that pie, Mrs. White?"

Mrs. White: "Yes, dear, very much."

Little Mary: "That's funny, 'cause Mummy said you haven't any taste."

---

Adored One: "Have you ever met as charming a girl as the heroine of your latest novel?"

Author (mechanically): "Never until now."

---

"Darling, you are the most beautiful girl in the world."

"Oh, Joeie, how quick you are at noticing things."

---

"I'm sorry, my boy, but I only punish you because I love you."

"I'm s-sorry, Father, that I'm n-not b-big enough to return your l-love."

---

"Did she inherit her beauty?"

"Sure—her old man left her a drug store."

"Why are you so angry with the doctor?"

"When I told him I was awfully, awfully tired he asked to look at my tongue."

—————○—————

Riggs: "Is your wife entertaining this season?"

Jiggs: "Not very."

—————○—————

Peggy: "So you had a letter from that college boy?"

Sally: "Yes. He wrote me and ast me did I get home all right from that party he took me to."

—————○—————

Dumb Waiter: "How did you find the chicken, Sir?"

Irate Customer: "Say, when that chicken died it forgot to relax its muscles."

—————○—————

Did you ever hear about the absent-minded professor who gave a lecture and forgot to open his mouth?

—————○—————

Movie Director: "In this scene you scatter a hundred dollars to the wind."

Scotch Actor: "Where's my double?"

—————○—————

After all, a barber is the only man who can cut a girl short and make her like it!

—————○—————

"Here's a cigar for you."

"No, thanks. I've sworn off smoking."

"Well, put one in your pocket for tomorrow."

—————○—————

He: "You are the sunshine of my life. Your smile falls like lightning into my soul. With you by my side I would defy all the storms of life."

She: "Is this a proposal or a weather report?"

—————○—————

Cook (to new maid): "You'll get along best with the misses if you just swallow yer pride an' treat her as an equal."

—————○—————

A Scottish farmer, on being elected to the school board, visited the city school and tested the intelligence of the class by asking:

"Now, boys, can any one of you tell me what naething is?"

After a moment's silence a small boy in the back of the room rose and said:

"It's what ye gi'd me the other day for holding yer horse."

Mother: "Jimmie, what would you like to give your Cousin Frankie for his birthday?"

Jimmie: "I know—but I ain't big enough."

---

Mr. Whitesbury, in discussing a former employee and at present a rival and competitor, said: "Why, he's a sharper, a thief, and a liar—and I taught him all he knows."

---

Teacher: "What are the things that count most in life?"

Accountant's Son: "Adding machines."

---

"Would anyone object to a tax on bachelors?" someone asked. "Yes, every single man."

---

Jack: "I'm going to marry a girl who can take a joke."

Bill: "That's the only kind you'll get."

---

School Teacher: "I'm quite put out with your little girl. She can't even tell me the date of the death of Louis XVI."

Mother: "Don't be too hard on her. We hardly ever read the newspapers."

---

"Do you know, I believe your husband is going to get locomotor ataxia."

"I shouldn't wonder—he has a perfect mania for buying cars."

---

"Mary," inquired the mistress, suspiciously, "did you wash this fish carefully before you baked it?"

"Goodness, Mum," replied the servant, "what's the use of washing a fish that's lived in water all its life."

---

Prosecutor: "And you shot at your husband five times and missed him?"

Wife: "Yes."

Prosecutor: "How did that happen?"

Wife: "Well, sir, he was sort of nervous."

---

A Lady: "Oh, officer, I feel so queer."

Officer: "What's the matter, Madam? Have you vertigo?"

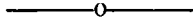
"Oh, yes, officer, about ten miles."

---

Squire: "Did you send for me, my lord?"

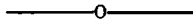
Lancelot: "Yes, hasten and bring me a can opener—I've got a flea in my knight clothes."

"Some of the customers who dine here," said the hotel manager, sadly, "seem to regard our silverware as a sort of medicine—to be taken after meals."



"Are you all from the South?"

"Yeah—South Dakota."



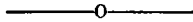
The teacher was about to give her class a lesson on some of the famous myths and legends of the past. Before beginning, however, she thought she would ask the students a few questions to see what they already knew about the subject.

"Now, can anyone tell me what a myth is?" she asked.

A little girl in the rear of the room raised her hand.

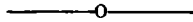
"All right, Alice, what is a myth?" the teacher questioned.

"Please, teacher, it's a female moth," answered Alice.



Aunt: "And were you a very good little girl at church this morning?"

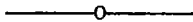
Sally: "Oh, yes, Aunt. A man offered me a big plate full of money and I said, 'No, thank you.'"



Then there was the old lady who was visiting an insane asylum. She observed the lunatics at work. But one man stood in a corner obviously idling his time away.

"My good man," she asked, "why aren't you working? Aren't you crazy?"

"Yes, ma'am, but not that crazy."

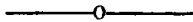


"The German school teacher asked each member of her class who the greatest living man was. As a prize she offered a nice new dollar bill. One little boy said Mussolini. Another said Roosevelt. Still another said King Edward VIII. But the teacher was not satisfied. Then she asked the little Jewish fellow.

"The greatest man living is Adolph Hitler," the Jewish lad replied. The German teacher was astonished.

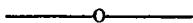
"Why, that's right, Isadore, but I'm surprised that you think so."

"I don't think so," answered the Jewish boy, "but I need the money."



"How'd your deaf and dumb uncle enjoy his vacation?"

"He didn't say."



"Do you believe in punctuation?"

"Yes, I always try to be on time."



# SORORITY SUE

W. W. MOORE

By Ed. Hart



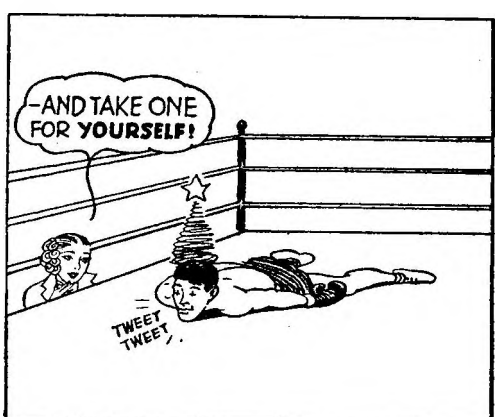
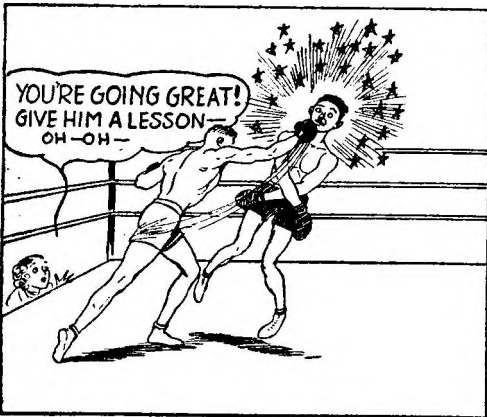
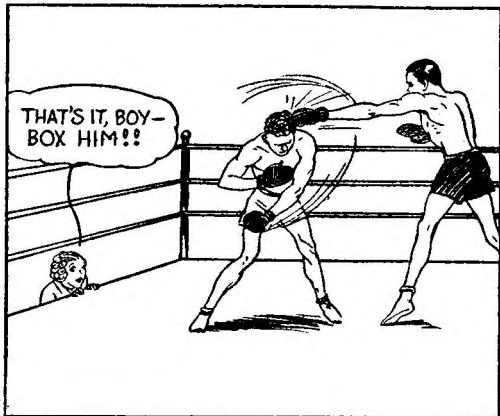
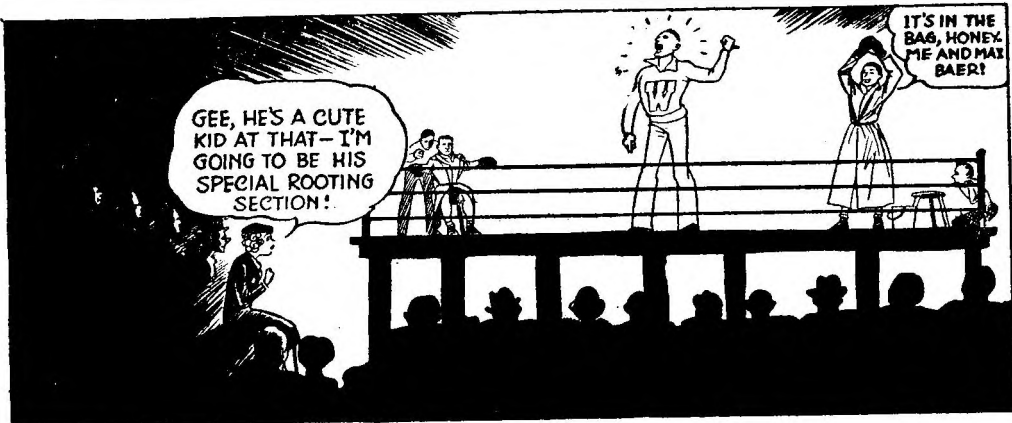




# SORORITY SUE

of WELLMOOR

BY Ed. Hart



# Wit of the World

There is the story of the London philanthropist who takes a group of newsboys to the suburbs for a day's swimming each year. On this occasion the train was about to pull out when a particularly dirty looking little urchin came running up out of breath.

"Why, sonny," the philanthropist exclaimed, "you certainly need this—you're awfully dirty."

The little fellow smiled.

"Yes," he answered. "I missed the train last year."

---

Professor: "Name one of the great philosphers."

Student: "Can't."

Professor: "Right."

---

She: "Didn't shave this morning, did you?"

He: "Why? Beard long?"

She: "Nope. No soap in your ears."

---

Waiter: "Do you want soup?"

Customer: "Is it good soup?"

Waiter: "Yeah, fourteen carrot."

---

Sentimental Singer: "When I sing tears come to my eyes. What can I do for this?"

Billie: "Try stuffing cotton in your ears."

---

"What's the trouble with that young Scotch college student?"

"Oh, he just got a shine and then remembered they were his roommate's shoes."

---

"Black man, befo' Ah wraps my fist around yo neck, has ya got any questions ta ast?"

"Jes this one, Charcoal, jes this one. Is you all leavin' a wife and chillen behind?"

---

He: "Do you know that in Holland the girls wear wooden shoes?"

She (after dancing with him): "I suppose it's a safety device."

---

"Does that pin mean you belong to a fraternity?"

"No. It means I belong to my girl friend."

Then there's the story of the Scotchman who has solved the problem of what to do with old razor blades. He shaves with them.

---

A sign was posted on the college bulletin board: "Mike Walsh—call Ann Arbor."

A few minutes later someone asked: "What's her number?"

---

Visitor: "I say, my good man, you'll be relieved to know that it wasn't mushrooms that made you ill at our place the other night—they were *toadstools*."

---

She (to college roommate): "If I'm studying when you come in, wake me up."

---

"Do angels have wings, Mummy?"

"Yes, darling."

"Can they fly?"

"Yes, dear."

"Then when is nurse going to fly, 'cause Daddy called her an angel last nite?"

"Tomorrow, darling."

---

Mother: "Johnny, if you eat any more you'll burst."

Johnny: "Well, pass the cakes, Mother, and get out of the way."

---

Sunday School Teacher: "Every child who would like to go to heaven one day stand up."

(All the class jumped up but little Dottie.)

Teacher: "Dottie, is it possible that you don't want to go to heaven?"

Dottie: "Not with that bunch."

---

Enraged Mother: "Ruthie! Kissing again! And I don't even know the young man!"

Ruthie: "But, Mother, he didn't kiss you!"

---

He: "Do you want to marry a one-eyed man?"

She: "No, why do you ask?"

He: "Then I'd better carry your umbrella."

---

Little Willie: "Dad, can I have a drum like Frankie's?"

Dad: "Nope, you'd make too much noise around the house."

Little Willie: "Oh, no, I wouldn't; I'd only play it when you were asleep."

"What is the orchestra playing now?"

"Beethoven's Ninth Symphony."

"Oh, dear, we must have missed the other eight."

—————○—————

He: "Did anyone ever tell you you had a beautiful chin?"

She: "No, why?"

He: "Then why are you growing another one?"

—————○—————

"A girl generally gets the man she goes after."

"But what happens when two girls go after the same man?"

"Oh, then he's arrested for bigamy."

—————○—————

Jim: "I'm learning to read lips."

Beatrice: "Really. How do you do that?"

Jim: "I'm using the touch system."

—————○—————

"What do you think of Kittie's determination to write a book?"

"I think it's a novel idea."

—————○—————

Modern Fairy Tale: A Scotchman throwing away five dollar bills and a Jewish fellow picking them up and handing them back to him.

—————○—————

"No woman tells me what to do; I'm boss in my family."

"Yeah, I'm a bachelor, too."

—————○—————

Mr. Cohen: "Abie, vy are your grades so much lower after the holidays?"

Abie: "Why, Fadder, everything's marked down after the holidays."

—————○—————

"Yes, indeed, he is a frail child."

"Well, you know he was born in a hospital."

—————○—————

"Why do they call her Venus?"

"Because she can't keep a man at arm's length."

—————○—————

"Hooray," said the mosquito as he bit the Crown Prince. "At last I have royal blood in my veins."

—————○—————

Absent-minded Professor: "Mary, I believe we've lost the road."

Absent-minded Professor's Wife: "Are you sure you had it when you left the house?"

A kiss that tells volumes is seldom a first edition.

---

Betty, four years old, was having a very unhappy morning, fussing and crying without cause. To change her thoughts her mother said to her:

"Betty, run to the window and see the big dog going by."

Mary watched the dog out of sight and then turned to her mother and said:

"Mama, what was I crying about?"

---

"Oh, dear, Florabella, and what do you call a person who drives an automobile?"

"I say, Mathilda, it all depends on how close he comes to running me down."

---

May: "Isn't it terrible to feel down at the mouth this way?"

Mai: "Let's go down and have our faces lifted."

---

"How did you learn to stay so long under the water?"

"I once lived at the same beach with one of my worst creditors."

---

Her: "It ought to be easy for a centipede to set a new altitude record."

She: "Why so?"

Her: "Well if he goes up only an inch, he's a hundred feet off the ground."

---

"Whatever happened to Lillian?"

"Why, haven't you heard? She married a millionaire and she's away on her moneymoon."

---

He: "Can I see you tonight?"

She: "Sure, stand on the corner of Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street. I'll be passing there about eight o'clock with my boy friend."

---

Many a girl who looks sweet enough to eat, does.

---

"My kid brother's only three and he can spell his name backwards."

"What's his name?"

"Otto."

---

"How would you classify a telephone girl? Is hers a business or a profession?"

"Neither. It's a calling."

Wife: "D'ye know you're growing quite handsome, John?"

Hubby: "Yes, Mary. It's a way I have when it gets anywhere near your birthday."

—————○—————

Wife: "Did you shoot anything?"

Husband (back from hunting trip): "Yes."

Wife: "Well, what do you mean by coming home with an empty bag?"

Husband: "I couldn't put the guide in it, could I?"

—————○—————

Father: "So you propose to take my daughter away from me without any warning."

Nervous Suitor: "Not at all. If there is anything concerning her you want to warn me about I'll listen."

—————○—————

Woman: "Your honor, he broke every dish in the house over my head and treated me cruelly."

Judge: "Did your husband apologize or express regret for his actions?"

Woman: "No; the ambulance took him away before he could speak to me."

—————○—————

Tourist at Niagara: "Are we near the falls yet?"

Guide: "Yes, sir. As soon as the ladies stop talking we'll hear the roar."

—————○—————

Two women were telling about their abilities to see and hear. One of them said:

"Do you see that house over there on the horizon?"

"Yes."

"Can you see that mosquito walking around on the roof?"

"No, but I can hear the shingles crack when he steps on them."

—————○—————

"I asked you to loan me a hundred dollars but you only gave me fifty."

"That's right. I lose fifty and you lose fifty."

—————○—————

A youth seated himself in a dentist's chair. He wore a loud shirt of striped silk and an even more wonderful striped suit. He had the vacant stare that goes with both.

"I'm afraid to give him gas," the dentist said to his assistant.

"Why?" asked the assistant.

"Well," said the dentist, "how will I know when he's unconscious?"

Mrs. O'Reilly: "An' 'ow do yer 'usband and yerself get along together, Mrs. O'Brien? Well, I hope."

Mrs. O'Brien: "Oh, yes, very well, Mrs. O'Reilly. 'Ere we've been married goin' on six months and I ain't 'ad to call in the police but twice."

—————○—————  
 Margie: "I wonder if Jack loves me?"

Maggie: "Of course he does. Why should he make you an exception?"

—————○—————  
 Teacher: "How can you tell the approach of winter?"

Bessie: "It begins to get later earlier."

—————○—————  
 A woman went to the drug store to buy cigars for her husband, who was sick in bed.

"Do you want them mild or strong?" the clerk asked.

"Give me the strongest you have," she said. "The last ones he had broke in his pocket."

—————○—————  
 "When can I hope to receive the money you owe me?"

"Always."

—————○—————  
 The honeymoon is over when the billing exceeds the cooing.

—————○—————  
 Pussycat: "Now do as you're told. Wash your face."

Kittycat: "Aw, gee, ma, can't I lead at least one of my own lives?"

—————○—————  
 "He's wonderful—he talks like a book."

"Really—but can you shut him up as easily?"

—————○—————  
 Visitor (to butler who is showing him through the picture gallery): "That's a fine portrait. Is that an old master?"

Butler: "No; that's the old missus."

—————○—————  
 "Why did you give up your pipe organ lessons?"

"It was too childish—playing with my feet."

—————○—————  
 "Osteopaths ought to make good critics."

"How's that?"

"They're always rubbing it in."

—————○—————  
 "I wish I could find a way to stop my wife from spending so much money on gloves."

"Why not buy her a diamond ring?"

"I hear your mother-in-law is dead."

"Yes, I accidentally shot her."

"That's too bad. How did it happen?"

"She stepped in front of my wife just as I fired."

—————○—————

"Poor Tom smashed his car and got pinched yesterday."

"Really? What was the charge?"

"Driving under the influence of woman."

—————○—————

Wallie (proud father showing triplets to visitor): "What do you think of them?"

Tom (pointing to the one in the middle): "I'd keep that one."

—————○—————

First Gnat: "What is your life's ambition?"

Second Gnat: "To get in the public eye."

—————○—————

Mother: "Jackie, stop eating with your fingers."

Jackie: "But, mother, weren't fingers made before forks?"

Mother: "Not yours, Jackie."

—————○—————

Doctor: "Congratulations! You're the father of triplets."

Father (who happens to be a politician): "I demand a recount."

—————○—————

"Are you laughing at me?" demanded the irate professor to his class.

"No," came the unanimous reply.

"Well," insisted the professor, "what else is there in the room to laugh at?"

—————○—————

Medical Professor: "What is the first thing you would do if a patient of yours were blown into the air by an explosion?"

Medical Student: "I'd wait for him to come down."

—————○—————

Then there's the story of the barber who reported for work two hours late.

"What's the big idea?" the boss demanded.

"I'm sorry," said the employee, "but while I was shaving I talked myself into a shampoo, a haircut and massage."

—————○—————

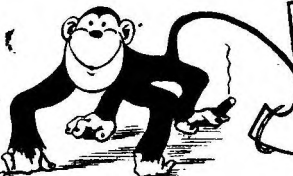
"Now you go straight home."

"I can't."

"Why?"

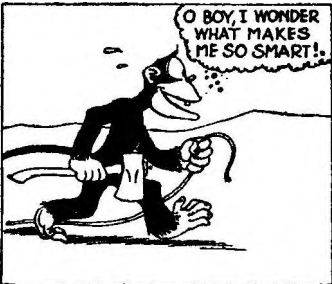
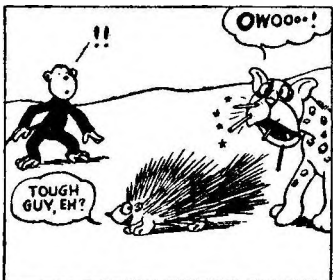
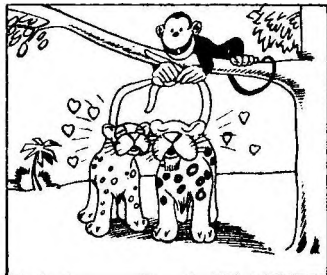
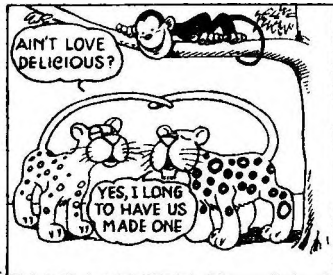
"Because I live around the corner."





# JOE

BY  
BILL  
ELKINS





# Singapore Sam

by **Stokie Allen**

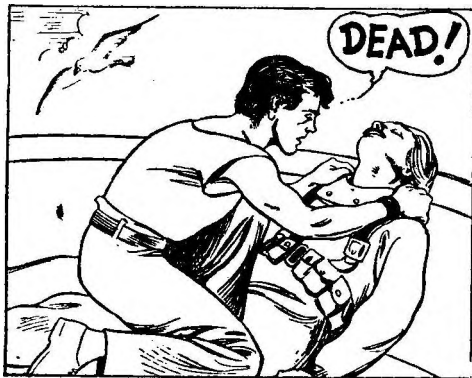
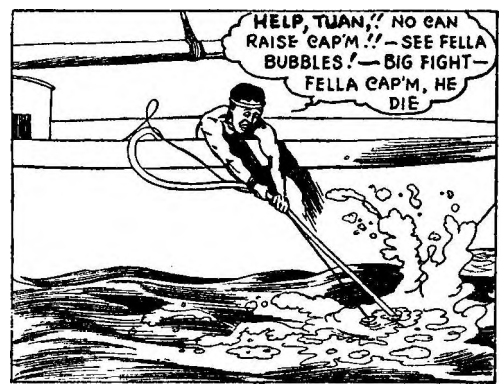
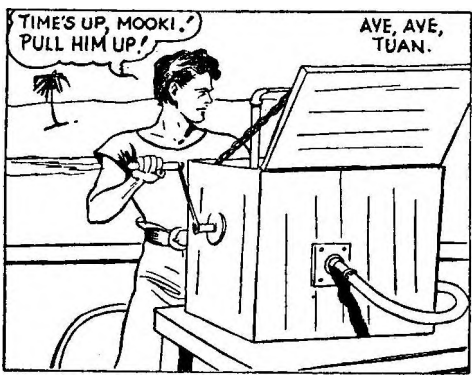
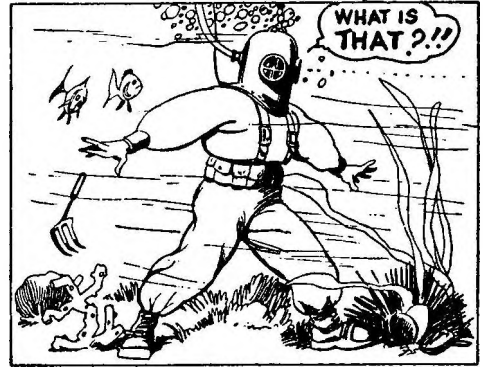
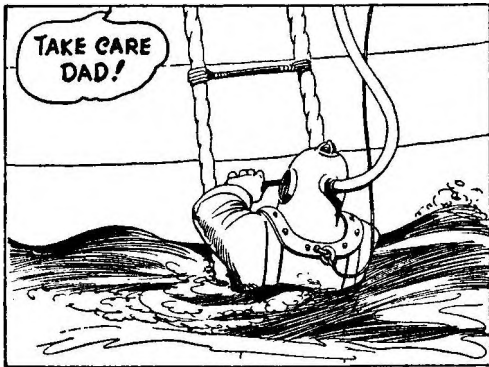
## THE MONSTER OF THE LAGOON!





# Singapore Sam

Stookie Allen

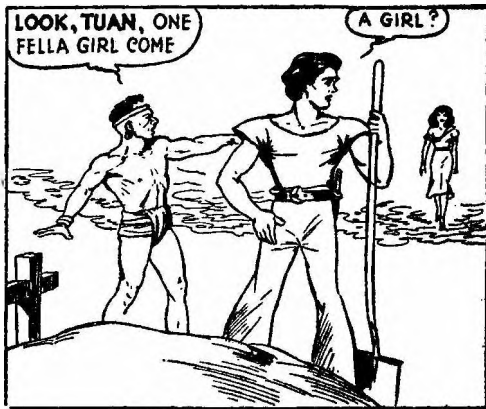
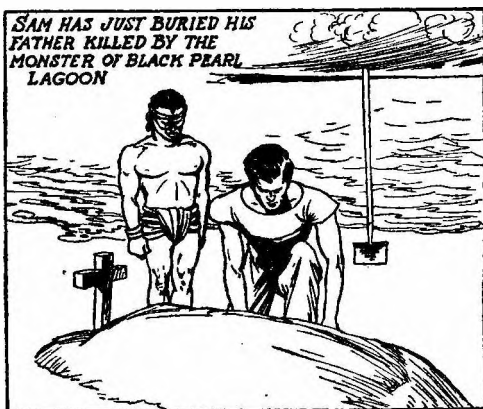




# Singapore Sam

The MONSTER STRIKES AGAIN

By STOKES ALLEN

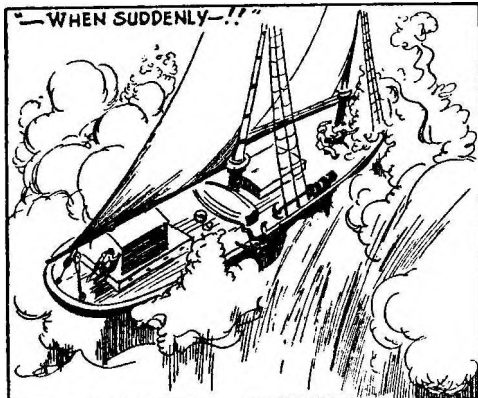
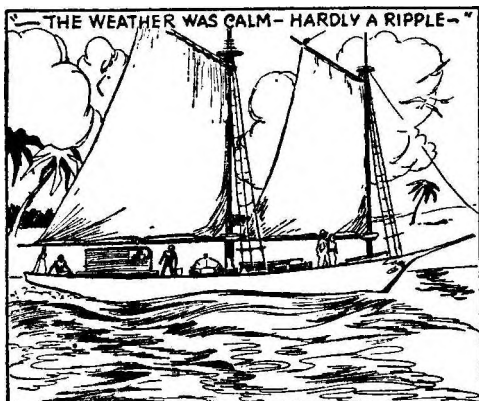




# Singapore Sam

The MONSTER STRIKES AGAIN

By STROOKS & ALLEN

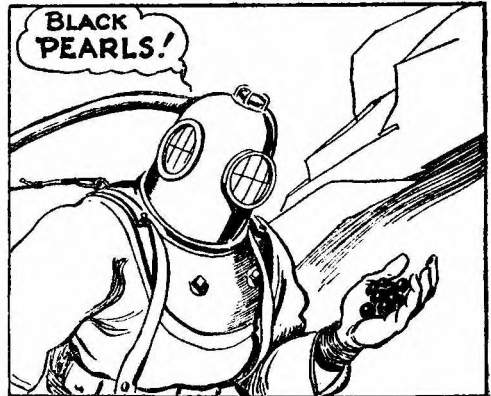
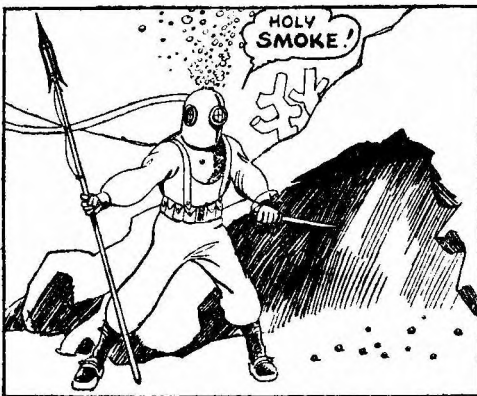
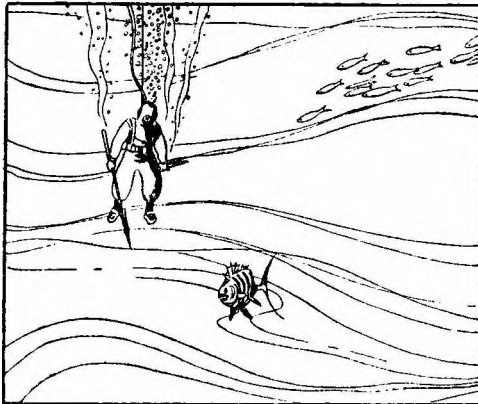
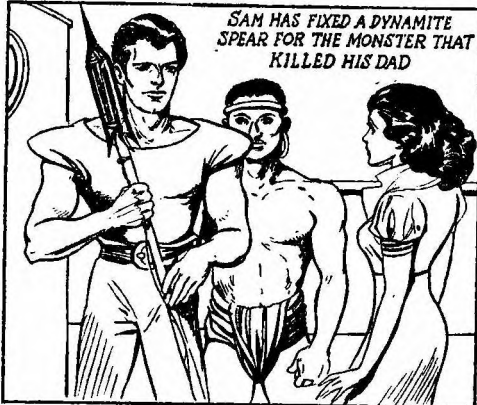




# Singapore Sam

by STOKLIE ALLEN

The DYNAMITE SPEAR

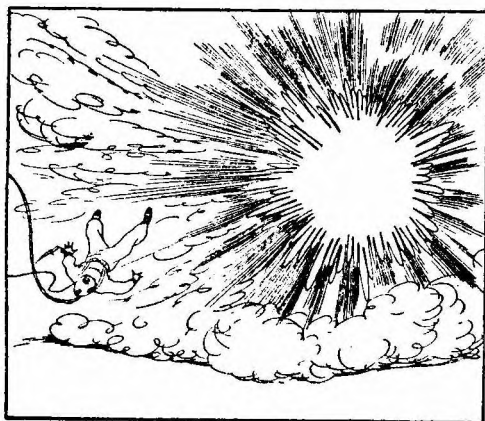
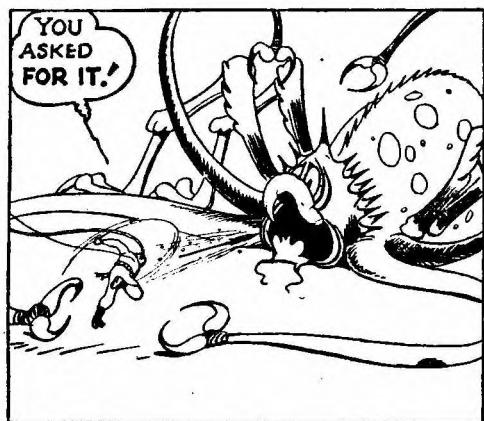
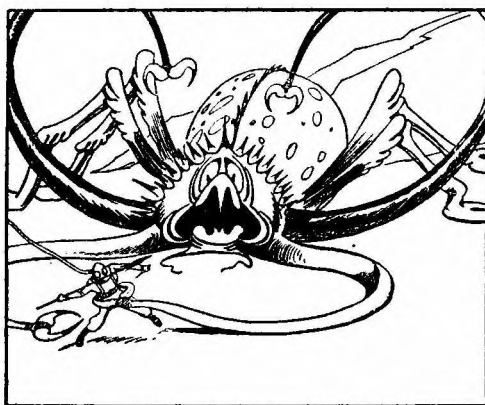
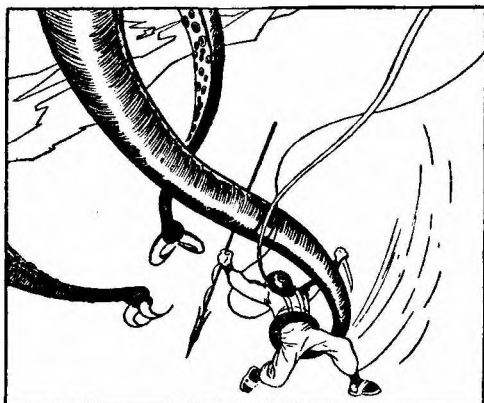




# Singapore Sam

The DYNAMITE SPEAR

by STOOKIE ALLEN



# Knock, Knocks!

Knock, knock!

Who's there?

Annette.

Annette who?

Annette her on the beach at Bali Bali!

---

Knock, knock!

Who's there?

Dot.

Dot who?

Dot's dot!

---

Knock, knock!

Who's there?

Chic.

Chic who?

Chic-cago, chic-cago that toddlin' town!

---

Knock, knock!

Who's there?

Jess.

Jess who?

Jess a song at twilight!

---

Knock, knock!

Who's there?

Cal.

Cal who?

California here I come!

---

Knock, knock!

Who's there?

Jeff.

Jeff who?

Jeff 'er see a dream walking?

---

Knock, knock!

Who's there?

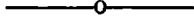
Landon.

Landon who?

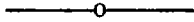
Landon bridge is falling down!



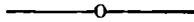
Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 Chicken.  
 Chicken who?  
 Chicken have anything her heart desires!



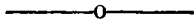
Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 Levy.  
 Levy who?  
 Levy me be.



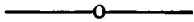
Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 Cuthbert.  
 Cuthbert who?  
 Cuthbert don't swear.



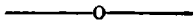
Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 Lettie.  
 Lettie who?  
 Lettie me call you sweetheart!



Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 Marion.  
 Marion who?  
 Marion slows a guy down.



Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 Chester.  
 Chester who?  
 Chester song at twilight!



Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 Justine.  
 Justine who?  
 Justine time for dinner!

Knock, knock!  
Who's there?  
Toots.  
Toots who?  
Toots what you think!

---

Knock, knock!  
Who's there?  
Bally.  
Bally who?  
We don't want no magazines!

---

Knock, knock!  
Who's there?  
Mama.  
Mama who?  
Mama don't allow dat in here!

---

Knock, knock!  
Who's there?  
Popeye.  
Popeye who?  
Popeye need a dime!

---

Knock, knock!  
Who's there?  
Elsie.  
Elsie who?  
Elsie you in my dreams!

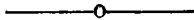
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Knock, knock!  
Who's there?  
Hiawatha.  
Hiawatha who?  
Hiawatha good girl till I met you!

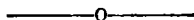
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Knock, knock!  
Who's there?  
Butch and Jimmie.  
Butch and Jimmie who?  
Butch yer arms around me and Jimmie a kiss!

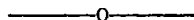
Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 Dishes.  
 Dishes who?  
 Dishes all dere is dere ain't no more!



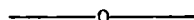
Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 Texas.  
 Texas who?  
 Texas a long time to get in!



Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 Your wife.  
 Your wife who?  
 Your wife your feet before you come in.



Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 Ida.  
 Ida who?  
 Ida wanna have nothing to do with you!



Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 Theresa.  
 Theresa who?  
 Theresa crowd.



Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 Wanda.  
 Wanda who?  
 Wanda buy a duck?



Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 U. S. A.  
 U. S. A. who?  
 U. S. A. nut.

Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 Obey.  
 Obey who?  
 Obey can you see by the dawn's early light!

---

Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 Birmingham.  
 Birmingham who?  
 Birmingham sandwich and a cuppa coffee!

---

Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 Chow mein.  
 Chow mein, who?  
 Chow mein the way to go home!

---

Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 Yvonne.  
 Yvonne who?  
 Yvonne a be alone!

---

Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 Nertz.  
 Nertz who?  
 Nertz so fast young man.

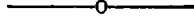
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Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 Big Horse.  
 Big Horse who?  
 Big Horse I love you!

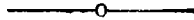
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Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 Spaghetti.  
 Spaghetti who?  
 Spaghetti 'n long now!

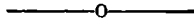
Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 Canoe.  
 Canoe who?  
 Canoe let me have a buck?



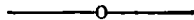
Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 Ray.  
 Ray who?  
 Ray for our side!



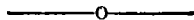
Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 Carrie.  
 Carrie who?  
 Carrie me back to ole Virginia!



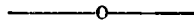
Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 Minnesota.  
 Minnesota who?  
 Minnesota button on her dress.



Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 Gus.  
 Gus who?  
 Gus I'd better be going!



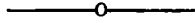
Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 Howie.  
 Howie who?  
 Howie am I doin'?



Knock, knock!  
 Who's there?  
 Detroit.  
 Detroit who?  
 Detroit to tell a joke but it fell flat.

# Delightful Dialogues

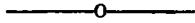
"Cuthbert is getting to be a regular little roughneck," sighed the boy's mother, "I caught him shooting at the Hindenberg with his pop-gun today."



A beautiful girl was on trial. As the jury returned after reaching a decision the judge asked:

"What's your verdict, gentlemen of the jury?"

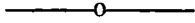
Jury foreman: "She's a wow!"



"Here is an invitation to my golden wedding."

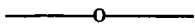
"Your golden wedding?"

"Yes—I'm marrying the son of a millionaire."

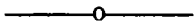


"'Ow near to us do you think that lightning was, 'Arry?"

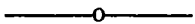
"Dunno, partner—but this cigarette wasn't lit a second ago."



There's the schoolboy who wrote on his examination paper: "We are now the masters of steam and eccentricity."

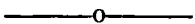


The college girl's national anthem: "We're tinting tonight."



"Help! Help! I've just swallowed a bottle of ink."

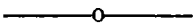
"Things certainly look black for you."



"Tell me, Abie, vere ya goin' in dot outfit?"

"Ach, I'm going tobogganing."

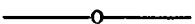
"Vait den. I go too. I need some shirts and ties."



Writer: "Here's my manuscript which I offered you a year ago."

Editor: "But if I rejected it a year ago, what's the use of bringing it back now?"

Writer: "Well, you've had a year's experience since then."



Mother: "Now remember, Jimmie, there's a ghost in the closet where I keep the cake."

Jimmie: "Funny thing you never blame the ghost when there's some cake missing. It's always me."

The teacher was upset about little Freddie. Finally she sat down and wrote his mother a note: "Your son is the brightest boy in his class but he is also the most mischievous. What shall I do?"

The mother wrote back: "Do as you please. I'm having my own troubles with his father."

—o—

"I trust you are not afraid of microbes," apologized the cashier as he cashed the school teacher's check with soiled currency.

"Don't worry," the teacher replied, "a microbe couldn't live on my salary."

—o—

"You sure can ask a lot of questions," said the father, "I'd like to know what would have happened to me if I had asked so many questions when I was a boy."

"Perhaps," replied the youngster, "you'd have been able to answer some of mine."

—o—

"I saw Bill's picture on Mabel's dresser."

"Don't worry, that's just a frame-up."

—o—

"Do you want to marry a one-eyed man?"

"No; why?"

"Then let me carry your umbrella."

—o—

"Shakespeare will live forever."

Dumb Dora: "Aw gwan, he's been dead for years."

—o—

Seven Ages of Woman

The infant.

The little girl.

The miss.

The young woman.

The young woman.

The young woman.

The young woman.

—o—

"What did you have for lunch?"

"Two guesses."

"No wonder you're so hungry."

—o—

"Are you an actress, Auntie?"

"No, darling, why do you ask?"

"Because Daddy said that when you came we'd have a scene."

Nothing irks the girl who is away at school so much as opening a letter from home, shaking the envelope and finding nothing but love and news.

—————○—————  
 He was such a cute little shaver that his parents decided to send him to barber college.

—————○—————  
 "Have you heard the new Swiss Anthem?"  
 "Go ahead, yodel it."  
 "Ain't cheese sweet?"

—————○—————  
 Woman (at door): "Would you agree to chop sticks for dinner?"  
 Tramp: "No, lady, I ain't no bloomin' Chink."

—————○—————  
 "Hey, whatcha doing down there?"  
 "Blasting for the new subway."  
 "How long before it'll be finished?"  
 "About four years."  
 "Oh, well—I guess I'll take a cab."

—————○—————  
 "Your school is not a seminary; it's a match factory," said the alert college man to a girl student.

"You're right," answered the girl. "We furnish the heads and get the sticks from the men's colleges."

—————○—————  
 "I see where a man was arrested for kissing his wife in public."  
 "Another case of mistaken identity, I suppose."

—————○—————  
 Freshie: "How about a little kiss?"  
 Miss: "None of your lip."

—————○—————  
 We wonder what Solomon would have replied if someone had asked, "Who was that lady I seen you with last night?"

—————○—————  
 A judge in a baby contest recently gave all eight babies the first prize. We call that "Safety First."

—————○—————  
 "Johnny, stop poking little Joie."  
 "I ain't pokin' him, Ma, I'm countin' his measels."

—————○—————  
 Catherine: "The days of miracles are over."  
 Katherine: "I don't know about that. I read an article the other day that set me thinking—"



"No, my little man, we can't all be Roosevelts—just think what a mess the telephone directory would be."

---

"Is that your brother over there?"

"No."

"He looks like you."

"We go to the same optician."

---

"Does she have her own way much?"

"I'll say she does! She writes up her diary a week ahead of time."

---

"Did you have a liberal education?"

"Yes, my Dad spent plenty."

---

"Have a Camel?"

"No, but we keep a dog."

---

"Doctor I think I'm going to die."

"What's the matter?"

"I just broke by life-time fountain pen."

---

Kay: "That fellow is a track man."

Cecil: "Isn't he handsome? I wish he was on my track."

---

"Do you take this woman for butter or for wurst?"

"Oh, liver alone. I never sausage nerve."

---

Patient: "Your bill reads Fifty visits, \$200; medicine, \$40."

Doctor: "Yes, that's it."

Patient: "Well, I'll pay for the medicine and return the visits."

---

"That star is Venus. It was named after a beautiful woman."

"Is that the star the wise men followed?"

---

"Hand over your cash or I'll blow your brain out," commanded the stick-up man. The intended victim laughed loudly. He was a college boy.

---

Witness (at train wreck): "What was the trouble, conductor?"

Conductor (slyly): "Well, sir, the condition of the track was simply unparalleled."

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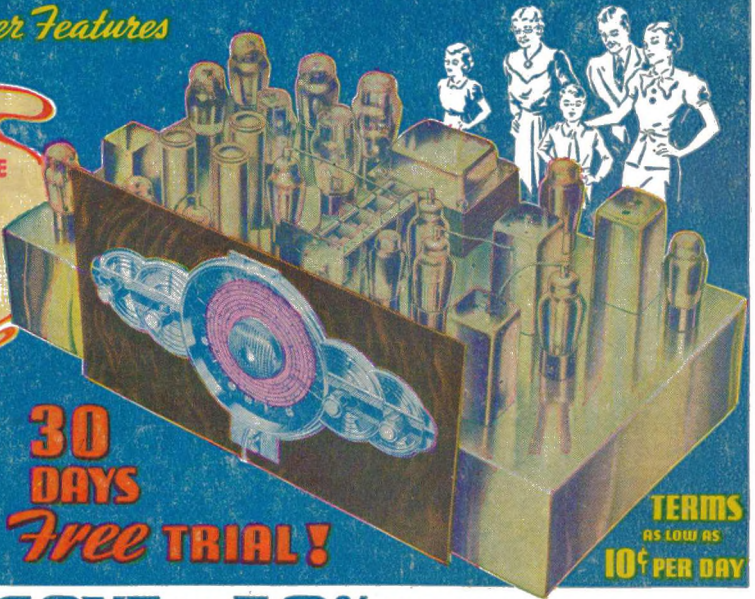
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