

Guid Beyton

New AT Term AT TOWESS

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Back to Malory Towers

'Darrell, you and Sally absolutely sure that you don't want are come with Daddy and me when we drive Felicity to to school?' asked Mrs Riversas slice of she buttered toast. a 'Absolutely sure,' said Darrell firmly. Ί think that seeing dear old Malory Towers and knowing that don't belong there any more would make me burst into honest. Do you feel the same, Sally?' Darrell's tears, to be friend, Sally Hope, who was staying with the Riversfamily days, nodded. 'Exactly the for few same.l would like back and see the to old place one day, but go not vet. of The memories all the fun we shared and the friends we made are just too fresh.' Sally sighed heavily. Ί can't believe that schooldays are our over and we shall never go back to Malory **Towers** again.' 'You poor old things,' said Mr Rivers, looking up from his newspaper. 'Really, would think that anyone the two of left look forward you had nothing to to. But both off university soon and a you're whole to new chapter beginning for you.' is

'Iknow,and I'm really looking forward to starting university,' said Darrell. 'But it won't be as much fun as school.'

'lexpect it will be fun, but in a different way,' put in her younger sister, Felicity. 'Just think, you'll have your own rooms, and no lights-out, and bet you'll both be invited to lots of parties and dances, and _′

who knows, 'And. we may even get a little studying said Sally, with a hard done,' laugh.'It's going to be jolly well, young work as Felicity, there's SO no need to envious.' auite so sound

'Oh, I'm not envious, Sally,' Felicity assured her, pushing her porridge bowl away. 'I absolutely *love* being at Malory Towers, and I can't wait to get back there.'

'And 1 suppose your eagerness to return to school has nothing to do with the fact that you'll be able to shake off Bonnie Meadows at last?' said Darrell slyly. 'My word, the poor girl won't know what to do with herself when you're gone.'

somebody else, hopefully,' said Felicity, 'Latch on to groan. 'That girl has absolutely ruined my holiday. a choose all the towns in the country to from. why move here?' did her parents have to

'Felicity!' protested Mrs Rivers. 'That's not very nice. Especially as the poor girl obviously thinks the world of who was getting a Felicity. little tired of hearing the new neighbours' daughter referred 'poor girl', to as a rolled her eyes and said, 'No, she doesn't. Not really. She's just grateful to have some company of herown age, for change. I'm sure she would have been just the same with anyone who had been kind to her.'

'That's the trouble, Felicity – you were *too* kind to her,' said Darrell. 'You need to be firm with people like Bonnie.'

'Iknow,' said Felicity with a sigh, thinking that downright Darrell would have had no trouble in brushing off. Bonnie 'But I iust couldn't bring myself be to unkind her spite of the fact that she's such to in drip!' а

'That's what comes of children wrapping in cottonwool,'remarked would Mr Rivers. Ίt do young Bonnie the world of school like good to be sent to a could mix Malory Towers, where she with other girls and learn to stand on her own two feet.'

'But I thought that Bonnie was too sickly and delicate to go to school?' said Mrs Rivers.

'She may have been when she was younger,' said Mr newspaper. 'But there's absolutely Rivers, folding up his with her apart from an nothing wrong now overmother, anxious of course.'

'And Daddy oughtto know,' said Darrell, referring to the fact that Mr Riverswas a highlyrespected member of the medical profession.

'Of course.' said Mrs Rivers. 'But I can't help little sorry for Mrs Meadows. It must have been feeling a when Bonnie was ill, dreadfully worrying for her especially with Mr Meadows being away so much.l it's only natural that she's got suppose into the habit of being over-protective.'

'Mother. do spendmy last precious we have to Bonnie?' asked moments home talking about Boring at Felicity plaintively. 'Isn't it bad enough that she's been my shadow the last few weeks?' for

'All right, dear, we shan't mention her again,' said Mrs Rivers. 'Now, are absolutely sure that you you left of And is haven't anything out your trunk? and ready?' 'Yes, packed I've doubleyour night case all checked and I haven't forgotten anything,' answered Felicity.

Rivers, his 'Good,' said pushing Mr chair back and feet. 'In that case, I shall go getting to his and start loading the car and we'll be off.' up

1 shall have to learn to stand on 'Isuppose my own two feet as well,' said Felicity with a sigh. 'Now that I shan't have my big sister at school to look out for me. I shall be SO lonely!'

Darrell laughed. 'Somehow I think you'll learn to stand on your own two feet very well. And as for being lonelywell. tried to every time | speakto you at school you were fine.' your friends, you'll be surrounded by SO I daresay

'l'm looking forward seeing SO to the others said. 'Susan, and Pam, and Julie...' 'And again,' Felicity June?' asked Sally with a quizzical look.

'Yes, even June,' laughed Felicity. 'I know that she can be troublesome, and outspoken, and downright wicked at times – but she's jolly good fun and she does make me laugh.'

Just like her cousin, Alicia, thought Darrell. 'Well,' she said. 'So long as she doesn't involve you in anyof her crazy schemes, and get you into trouble.'

'Ireally think that June is beginning to change,' said Felicity thoughtfully. 'Remember how she knuckled down to games practice last term? And don't forget that she saved Amanda's life!'

'Yes, June proved that she has good stuff in her,' said Sally. 'And no one could doubther bravery. But she's one of who will work hard if those people always something if she wantsto prove interests her, or a point to point else. Once she loses interest, made her someone or has and doesn't need to try any more _ then watchout! Because when June is boredor has nothing to focus her that's when she starts stirring attention on, thingsup!'

Exactly like Alicia, thought Darrell, grinning to herself as she remembered some of her friend's more outrageous pranks.

Felicity laughed. 'Yes, you're right, Sally. Actually, I hope June doesn't change too much. I couldn't bear it if she went all goody-goody on us!'

'I don't think there's much danger of that,' said Darrell drily.

'June sounds very strange girl, I must say,' a who had been listening with interest. said Mrs Rivers. it does seem that she has many good qualities and certainly the Malory Towers is place to bring them to the fore.'

Αll three girls agreed heartily with that, but there was the matter time to discuss any further, for Mr no said, 'Felicity, Riversappeared in the doorway and I've put your trunk and night case in the ΑII I need car. now is you and your mother, and we leave.' can

Felicity leaped up excitedly to get her hat and coat, and Sally walked with her and Mrs Rivers to then Darrell Felicity, the door. But, alas for as they stepped outside, was walking Bonnie Meadows up the garden path, determined new friendgo not to let her without saying goodbye. girl, small and very dainty, with She was a pretty enormous, soft brown eyes, brown curly hair and a little mouth. She also had air fragility rosebud an of and Felicity liked to helplessness _ or, call it, as goofiness abouther.

'Oh. Felicity, ľm glad that you haven't left vet!' SO she cried in her lisping, little-girl voice. 1 know that we yesterday, but I said goodbye did want to come and SO see you off, and Mummy knew that I wouldn't be able to rest if didn't get my way, so am!' 1 here I

Asnort from behind her made Felicity turn, to see her sister and Sally standing there with idiotic grins on their faces. She

them, then turned back to glared fiercely at Bonnie too-bright voice, said, 'Yes, here you rather and, in а it's been simply lovely spending Well, Bonnie, the hols with you, but

Daddv's waiting and...Oh, Bonnie, please don't crv!' But it too late. Tears had already welled was up in Bonnie's big eyes, her bottom lip juttedout and, to Felicity's great embarrassment, she to began sob loudly. expression of horror her face, Felicity looked An on roundat Darrell, who at once took charge She came forward arm round Bonnie's situation. and put an shoulders, saying briskly, kindly, 'Come along now, but all these there's really no need for tears. Before Bonnie, vou know it the holidays will be here and Felicity be home again. And ľm sure she'll write to you, often, won't you, Felicity?'

'What?Oh, Every week,' ves, of course. said er look towards Felicity, casting anxious the car, where an her father impatiently drumming his was fingers on the wheel. 'Now, I really must go, Bonnie, or shall steering 1 first day back.' late be on my

She gave the girl pat the shoulder, then a on turned to her sister and said. 'I'll write to vou. as well.

will write back, won't you, and Darrell. You tell me all university?' 'Of abouthow you're at getting on with a smile. 'Now off course,' promised Darrell will explode! you go, or poor Daddy simply hello to dear old Malory Towers from Sally and me, Sav won't you?'

Felicity ran to the car, Darrell's and Sally's goodbyes and Bonnie's cry of, 'I shall miss you so much, Felicity!' following her.

'Goodbye, Darrell! Goodbye, Sally!'called Felicity, sticking her head through the open window as herfather started

the car. 'Goodbye, Bonnie! I'll write to you soon.' Then they were off — back to Malory Towers.

The journey was a long one, and to Felicity, eager back with her friends, to be it seemed to go on forever. picnic lunch and they found Mrs Rivershad packed a spot overlooking the stop and eat, but pleasant to a sea Felicity excited, and impatient to was SO SO resume that she could only manage a couple the journey, of sandwiches.

They drove on for another hour, then the car rounded а bend in the road and Felicity cried, 'There it is -Towers! can it!' Malorv 1 see

Felicity felt warm glow of a pride as she looked at school. Standing the top the school her at of a cliff, Malory Towers was certainly a magnificent building, four towers one at each corner making it castle. look almost like Mr along a a Riversdrove on, road and through a big, open gateway steep, narrow into the grounds of the school, whichwas thronged chattering girls and groups excited, of parents. He had hardly brought the to stop before Felicity car a had the door open and was off, racing across the lawn. 'Felicity!' called her mother. 'You haven't got your night

use. Felicity But it was no was now part of laughing, gossiping third formers, all of them busy group of exchanging greetings and catching up on news.

come back!'

case. Felicity.

'Look everyone, it's Felicity! Did you have good hols?' 'Hallo, Nora! Goodness, don't you look brown?'

'I say, isn't that Pam over there, with her people? Pam, come and join us!'

'Have the train girls arrived yet? My word, isn't it super to be back?'

It certainly was super, thought Felicity happily, looking roundat all her friends. There was the big, good-

natured Pam, the scatterbrained but humorous Nora, and horse-mad Julie, who had brought her pony, Jack Horner, to girl, with short, light-brown school with her. And now a slim third formers hair and a turned-up nose, joinedthe Felicity's best friend. Susan. She slipped her arm through Felicity's and said, 'Shall we take our health certificates to Matron and find our dormy? Then perhaps we'll have time to go down and take a look at the loog before supper.'

'Good idea,' said Felicity. Ί where say, is my night case? Oh goodness, I've left it in the car. And ľd completely forgotten about Mother Daddy! and Wait here a Susan, while I and say goodbye moment, just go to them.'

With that, Felicity dashed off, back to where she had left her parents.

finallyremembered 'Ah. vou've us,' SO said her father, humorous twinkle in his she raced a eye as over to them.

'Sorry, Daddy, - | was just *so* excited to the see others again,' gabbled Felicity, her words tumbling out. 'Susan's here, and Nora, and Julie'sback, and she's brought pony, and -'

'We quite understand, dear,' said Mrs Rivers, with a smile. 'I'm just glad that you like life at school so much.'

'Like it? I *love* it!' said Felicity ecstatically, hugging her mother.

Mrs Rivershugged her back and said, 'Now, you will write won't you? Just to once you've settled in, let know us how you're And we'll be getting over to on. see you at half-term, of course.'

Having finished her goodbyes, Felicity grabbed her night friends case, and she and her entered the North Tower and made their way to Matron's room.Each towerat the like school was separate house, each with its a own

dormitories, dining-room and Matron, and the girls came together the main building for lessons. The girls from the in along very well with each different generally got towers other, but there was a good deal of friendly rivalry, and every girl was intensely proudof her own tower. convinced that itwas quite the best in the school.

Matron's There was a strange girl in room, handing over her health certificate, and the others looked at curiously. She was striking, rather than pretty, with a shiny fair hair long, aquiline nose, very straight, and grey eyes, whichwere fringed with thick dark lashes that contrasted have been very starkly with her pale hair. She would attractive, but slightly disdainful expression. for her haughty, 'As though she has bad smell underher nose,'as a Susan remarked later. The third formers wondered who she was, but before their curiosity could be satisfied, Matron turned smile, 'Ah, more third greet them, saying with her beaming to formers! Well, girls, it's very good to see you all back again hope none of you is going to give me and I any trouble don't want any fallingill this term. I of you or accidents. And, aboveall no midnightfeasts.' having

'As if would, Matron,' said Nora, with an we wide-eyed look. 'We're innocent, going to be the third form in bestbehaved the history of Malory Towers.'

'Apart from June, perhaps,' said Julie, with a laugh.'I say, where *is* June? Have you seen her yet, Matron?'

'No, but I've no doubtshe'll turn up, just like bad penny,' replied Matron wryly.'It's a wonder she and Alicia, haven't turned her cousin, my hair grey between them. Now, girls, let me have your health certificates – and woe betide who has forgotten hers!' anyone

But, fortunately, no one had, and as, one by one, the third formers gave them in to Matron, the new girl stood

to one side, watching them, Felicity thought, rather as one might watchanimals in a zoo.

When Matron finished. she remember had seemed to said, 'I've a for she girl here who will the girl, new be your form, so you may well take her with vou joining as bit.' and show her rounda She put her hand on the girl's 'This is arm and drew her forward. Amy Ryder-Cochrane.'

form last term, took the been head of the Pam. who had way, 'Pleased lead and said friendly in her to meet vou, Amy. I'm Pam Bateman, and this lot are Felicity Rivers, and Julie Adamson.' Susan Blake, Nora Woods

'Hallo, Amy,' chorused the third formers. 'Welcome to Malory Towers.'

The inclined head in way that was girl her a regal, and Felicity had almost to stop herself giggling. She didn't much like the look of Amy, but was determined to Being the chance. a form give her a new girl in where all the others each other for had known а while must be quite daunting, and Amy was just perhaps a little shy. So she smiled the girl and said. 'If at you we'll show you come with us, to your dormy. all Matron. we in together?' are

from her Matron picked piece of paperup desk a and said, 'Yes, you're all dormitory number nine, in along called Winifred with June, another new girl Holmes and Veronica Sharpe.'

away to she moved Then greet two second formers, while the third formers looked at one another in dismay, and Nora gave a groan. 'Veronica Sharpe! Don't say that she third for another term!' is staying on the in 'She if she's sharing dormy,' must be, said Susan our gloomily. 'Rotten luck for us.'

'Now, that's enough, girls!' said Matron crisply. 'Off you go now to unpack your things— and make sure that you put everything away tidily.'

'Yes, Matron,' chorused the girls, and they trooped out obediently, taking their night cases with them.

'lexpect you must find all this rather strange, Amy,' said Susankindly, as they made their way upstairs. 'But don't worry, you'll soon settle in. Have you been to boarding school before?'

'Of course,' answered Amy in affected rather an tone. 'I went to Highcliffe Hall, and it simply first-class. was One of the best schools the and frightfully in country, exclusive.'

The who thought listening third formers, that there was country school in no better the than their own Malory raisedtheir eyebrows beloved Towers. at this open the door of dormitory, pushing the Felicity said coolly, ʻlf it's marvellous, what made you SO come here?' leave and

Amy quickly. She couldn't tell the truth, of thought course whichwas that her father had decided that she had become far too conceited and stuck-up for her own good since she started at Highcliffe Hall! And that the only way to bring her down to earth was for her to good, sensible school, whose pupils attend a learned the thingsthat mattered. Instead she said, 'Oh, the far away from my home that it difficult for was so was Daddy half-term. Mummy and to visit at Malory Towers is much nearer for them, so suppose that's one advantage it old school, anyway.' has over my Amy others followed the into the dormitory she spokeand as looked round. wrinkling her nose in distaste. 'Goodness. awfully it's cramped in here,' she complained, her putting night case on one of the beds. 'At Highcliffe there were only four girls to а dormitory, so we had plenty of space don't think much of to things. And I the put our way this room has been decorated.'

And the girls didn'tthink much of Amy! They wanted to like her, and to make her feel welcome at

Malory but, really, was making Towers, she Didn'tshe realise terribly difficult. that it simply wasn't done everything like for new girl criticise to а this?

'Well. I'm sorry if our standards don't match up Hall,' Felicity spokeup, looking those of Highcliffe to coldlyat the new girl. 'But I, for one, think it's very nice room!' 'Hear, hear!'chorused the others.

And indeed it was a very nice dormitory. Despite Amy'sscornful of words, there was plenty room for all beside girls. Each one had little cabinet the her bed. a in whichshe could keep all personal belongings, well her as small wardrobe. The beds had floral as a pretty green, patterned bedspreads, which matched the curtains at the big from where window, there was а splendid view of the beautiful beds already of gardens. One the had pair beside of slippers placed neatly it. and there was The book on top the little cabinet. girls guessed of a that they belonged Veronica, and wondered where she to was.

hate unpacking,' sighed Nora, opening night 'How I her case. 'Thank goodness our trunks aren't brought until up tomorrow, because simply couldn't face having to everything away tidily on back.' put my first day

Afrowncrossed Amy'shaughty little face as she said. 'Don't that we actually tell me have to unpack our Highcliffe Hall each dormitory had trunks ourselves? Why, at our unpacking, and looked after our maid, who did all a beds.' clothes. and made our

who was over her night case, looked Pam. bending up and said, 'Well, I'm afraid there are maids to for no unpack you here, Amy. We have to do everything ourselves.'

'That's right,' said Nora, nodding solemnly. 'It's a hard life, but you'll soon get used to it. The dressing-bell goes at five o'clock sharp, and after we'vewashed — in cold

water, of course – we must sweep the floor and make sure that everything is spick and span in here.'

girls had to force down a The laugh as they watched poor Amy, who looked if she was aboutto faint! as Then very serious Felicity, with a expression indeed, went on, 'After that, Matron comes in to do her inspection, and everything isn't exactly right it's if bread and water for breakfast. If we're lucky!'

much for Nora, who gave one of This was too her and Amy, realising explosive of snorts laughter at lastthat she was being teased, flushed brightred and glared third formers. she had no time furiously at the But to open, and a retort, for the door was pushed girl with dark eyes and a wicked, narrow cheeky expressionburst in. June was back!



New friends and an old enemy

perfect hubbub Αt once a broke out, and the newcomer foundherself June might be stubborn, outspoken surrounded. and malicious, she also had the kind of but daring and boldness that the others envied and that, along with her playing talentfor the most amazing tricks and a wicked sense of humour, that she was extremely popular. meant 'June, you're back! How marvellous!' ʻDid you come on the train? We wondered where you were.' brought jokes and tricks with 'Hope you've plenty of you.' brought 'You bet I have! And I've June grinned. new member of the third form.' something else too a

first time, the She stood aside and, for the girls realised that someone had entered the room behind her. The new girl short, boyish cap of had pale hair, laughing blue eyes а friendly, open face. The girls liked the and a look of her at once, and thought how different she was from Amy when she grinned round and said, 'Hallo everyone, I'm Freddie Well, actually Holmes. I'm Winifred Holmes, but everyone Freddie, calls me hope that you will too. June has SO Towers, been telling me all about Malory and simply can't tell you how happy am to be here.' then?' 'Oh, do two know one another, asked Julie. vou

'We the met on train,'said June, slipping her arm 'Miss Peters through Freddie's. was there, too, and, knowing what a kind soul I am. asked me to take Freddie undermy wing.'

sharply Felicity looked at June, knowing that – at she could be extremely *un*kind. times – But there was no girl's expression now. She looked trace of malice the in be back at Malory Towers, happy to and happy to have made a new friend.

Amy, meanwhile, had been very much in the background – wasn't the slightest and she wasn't happy aboutit! She bit interested in June and Freddie _ any of the or others, for that matter. But she did like being the centre of attention, and didn'tat all care to be this. She hadn't this ignored like wanted to come to she was stuck with it. stupidschool, but as she meant make everyone sit take notice. At Highcliffe to up and Amy'saristocratic looks, envied Hall everyone had admired expensive possessions and hung on her every word as abouther wealthy, well-connected family. boasted And she envy, for had thrived on their admiration and these thingswere extremely important to her. Although the Malory Towers girls much more sensible and down-to-earth than those at seemed

Highcliffe Hall, Amy had no doubtat all that she would soon become a source of great admiration to them, too.

take centre Eager to stage, she opened her night case and, with much groaning and sighing, began pulling thingsout and tossing them on her bed. If she made enough to fuss, perhaps one of the others would offer to unpack her trunk when it was brought up tomorrow! She gave a particularly loud sigh and June, who was extremely shrewd and and sizing people stared at her said very good at up, here?' in an amused voice, 'And who have we

'Oh, June, this is Amy Ryder-Cochrane,' said Felicity. 'Another new girl.'

afraid Amy is little trouble having a adjusting to our ways,' put in Susan, giving June a meaningful look. 'Her old was very exclusive, you see. One of school the best in the country, she tells us.' SO

'Dear me,' said June smoothly, walking over to Amy. 'Whata come-downfor you having to roughit with us at Malory Towers.'

Amy looked June suspiciously. Was she at being sarcastic? The others were in no doubtat all, and waited for feel the full force with bated breath the new girl to οf June's sharp tongue. But kind-hearted Pam didn'tfeel that it was fair to give Amy too hard a time on her first day, and stepped forward, asking, 'Have show Amy and Freddie before we time to rounda bit tea?'

Susan looked at her watchand answered, 'There isn't time to show them everything, but perhaps we can take a quick look at the swimming-pool.'

'And the stables,' put in Julie. 'I must see how Jack has settled in.' 'Jack?' repeated Freddie, looking puzzled.

'Jack is Julie'spony,' explained Felicity. 'His full name is Jack Horner, but his friends call him Jack.'

'A pony at school!' exclaimed Freddie. 'My word, how super. I'm simply dying to see him, and the swimming-pool, and...oh, everything!'

'Well, buck up and get your night case unpacked,' said Felicity. 'You too, June, otherwise we shan't have time to show the new girls roundat all.'

The two latecomers quickly unpacked, then June noticed that there were two spare beds.

'Someone seems to be missing,' she said.

'Well, there are normally ten to a dormitory, but there are only nine of us this year,' said Felicity.

'That's why there's a spare bed.'

'But there are only eight of us here,' said June. Then she pointed towards the bed with the slippers beside it and asked, 'Who's sleeping there?'

'Oh, of course, you won't have heard, June,' said Pam. 'We're to have the pleasure of Veronica Sharpe's company this term.'

us,' said June, pulling a face. 'Just what 'How lovely for need in the third form – sly, spiteful little а snob. we know that none of the old third formers could stand her.' 1 watchyour step, Felicity,' said Julie, with 'You had better 'Do you remember how your sister, Darrell, frown. caught her snooping around in the sixth's commonroom last term?'

I remember,' said Felicity, with a grin. 'Darrell 'Yes. respecting one's elders, write an made her essay on and got her to read it out to the whole of the sixth don't see what that's got to form. But do with me!' 1 'Well. Veronica was simply furious with Darrell, was too much of coward a to try and get back at

her,' said Julie. 'And if she's still holding a grudge, she might try to take it out on you.'

'Well, if she tries any of her mean tricks on Felicity, she'll have the whole of the third form to deal with,' said Susan loyally.

'She certainly will,' agreed Pam. 'But come on, let's not wasteany more of our time discussing

Veronica. We'll take a look in at our new common-room, then go down to the swimming-pool.'

And, chattering at the top of their voices, the girls left the dormitory and made their way downstairs.

As their voices faded away, the door of the bathroom dormitory opened at the end of the and someone Veronica Sharpe! stepped out

Veronica hadn't meant to listen in on the others – at first. She had just finished washing her handsin

bathroom when she had heardthe third formers the enter, and she fully intended to make her presence known and say them. Then she had overheard Amy's remarks to and been most how grand the new girl Wouldn't impressed by sounded. it fine to have a girl like that for friend, be a she thought _ someone right of the drawer! As out top she listened, it quickly became clear that the others weren't impressed by Amy at all and that suited just fine, for it that she would Veronica meant have difficult competition. Veronica had always foundit no but to make friends at school, she couldn't see that was due to her own sly, rather spiteful She it nature. that none of preferred tell herself the girls at to Malory Towers were good enough to become her friend. But now, here was someone who was good enough.

She took a step towards the door, then stopped her. If suddenly, as a thought occurred to she now they would know that she joined the others had overheard them, and would realise that she was only trying befriend Amy because she grand and wealthy. No, to was better stay hidden time being. Veronica for the to decided that she would all out to win Amy over go at teatime. then nobody could accuse her of wanting to be friends with the new girl for the wrong reasons. Pleased with herself, the girl tiptoed across to the bathroom door, listening all she for was worth. Α sneer her face when she heard the crossed others greet that horrid June. How Veronica disliked that girl and how she would love to take her down a two! Well, peg or when Miss Peters announced that she to head-girl was be third form tomorrow, she would do of exactly that! Veronica almost shivered with excitement at the thought. She was *sure* to be headgirl, for she had been in the third form for term already and wouldn't she enjoy one _ lording it over the others! And she was going to have the form for her friend. richest girl the The term was in really getting off to a good start.

Then Veronica heard her own name mentioned, and pressed the door. The smug smile slid from her ear even closerto face as she heard what the others thought of her. Sly, and a coward. Tears of sneaky, spiteful anger and self-pity sprang to her eves and she turned red with humiliation. The mean beasts! Not for moment did it occur to Veronica that it was her own behaviour in the past that had made the third formers despise did her. Nor mind that the girls were only speaking it cross her the truth. She did still bear a grudge against that high and Darrell Rivers, had spent many pleasant mighty and hours during the holidays back at thinking up ways to get her through her younger sister.The third formers' scornful words might have made another girl stop and think, and perhaps decide her ways. But Veronica only felt to change even more determined to get back at Felicity for her disgrace last term.

stormout of her wanted Part of to the bathroom and confront the third formers. But that would only end feeling even more humiliated, for then they Veronica in know that she had been eavesdropping. And would what would Amy think of her then? No. she needed to keep cool head and not act rashly. lt was a relief when a she heardthe others leave, and could emerge from her hiding place.

dormitory all With the to herself, Veronica was quite resist the do little snooping. That unable to urge to a Felicity's bed, over by for there was must be the window, photograph on of Felicity, Darrell framed the cabinet a The family and their parents. looked very happy, of them smiling widely, but Veronica felt verv sour indeed as she picked it up, fighting an impulse smash to throwit to the ground and it. But that would mistake, others be for the would a instantly suspect her. This was typical of Veronica. only saw thingsas they affected her. She didn'tthink that it would destroy another girl's belongings be wrong to that it would shame if she merely be a was caught out!

replaced the Carefully she photograph and walked over hers, wondering who the occupant the bed next to to was. bottleof expensive French perfume stood on Α the pink dressinggown cabinet and a very pretty had been folded very carefully, on the bed. Veronica placed, ran her hand over it, thrilled to discover that it felt like real silk. This must be Amy'sbed, for surelyno other third former would have such exquisite belongings. What a bit of luck hers! that the new girl had chosen the bed next to Instantly, Veronica's ill humour disappeared. There would plenty time for teach Felicity be of her to а lesson after all, she had the whole term ahead of her. For now she meant to concentrateon making

a friendof Amy. The rest of the third form, meanwhile, were happily showing off their school to the new girls.

lt real pleasure, thought Felicity, was a to show Freddie The new girl round. seemed genuinely thrilled be Malory Towers, and exclaimed to at with delight everything, reminding Felicity at very much of her first day. Amy, however, the way she had felt on turned her rather large nose up at everything.

'Don't we here?' have our own studies she asked. surprised displeased, as they looked and in at the COSV common-room. 'We did at Highcliffe Hall, and we were allowed decorate them just as we pleased.' to

with a 'You'll have to make do common-room now, Amy,' said June. 'I'm sure you'll think that it suits rest of down to the us ground a common-room for common girls!' The others laughed, but Amy scowled and turned away.

the stables, Freddie went into ecstasies Αt over Jack, great fuss of making him and begging Julie to let her a ride him one day. But Amy refused to go near him, the complainingthat the smell of stables made her feel sick.

When they reached the pool, Freddie's eyes lit up and she exclaimed, 'Oh, how lovelyit looks!So inviting! I could dive in right now.'

'Well. I shouldn't dive in with your clothes on, laughed Freddie.' Nora. 'Or you'll get into a with row Matron. But the weather is still quite warm for September, so may get the chance for you to go a week.' dip later in the

The Malory Towers girls were very proudof their beautiful, swimming-pool, whichwas hollowed natural out of rocks and filled by the tide ebbed the sea as and flowed. Amy, though, barely glanced at it, merely remarking haughtily, magnificent indoor 'We had a pool at Hall. It which meant that we Highcliffe was heated, could the winter too.' swim in months

good-natured Pam became Even exasperated with her, and muttered Felicity crossly to and June, 'She'll be going for than she if a swim sooner thinks, shut up. I'm just itching she doesn't to shove her in!' 'Be Pam,' laughed June. 'I've one or patient, two tricks and won't be long before dear Amy sleeve it too up my learnsthat pride comes before a fall!' As the third formers walked back to North Tower. they spotted two sixth formers coming towards them. and

Susansaid, 'Look, it's Kay Foster, the new Head Girl. And Amanda!'

Amanda Chartelow had been in the sixth form with term. She Darrell last had been a superb sportswoman, but had annoyed many of the girls with her arrogance and attitude. superior But poor Amanda had learned hard a lesson when she brokethe rules of the school and went swimming in the sea. The strong current had thrown her on to the rocks, and it was thanks to June that she hadn't drowned. Sadly, though, Amanda's injuries had paid to her put hopesof representing her the Olympic Games, country in all or of taking part in any sport at for girl very bad time while.and the had gone through а indeed. lt would have been very easy for her have to moped about, or become bitter, but Amanda had proved to everyone that her character as strong was overnight, she body. Almost as her had lost her arrogance, thrown herself into coaching the younger girls, and had mind that, if made up her she couldn't pursue a career she would as sportswoman, train as Games a a Amanda Mistress. had become a much nicer person and girls, who had once disliked the her SO heartily, now admired and looked her. And they were very up to pleased to see that the slight limp, whichhad been a result of to have her injuries, now seemed disappeared.

the third formers Amanda greeted cheerily, then gave them some news which delighted them. 'Miss made me games So Grayling has captain. hope all you youngsters are going to work hard for me, for I shall be a real tyrant!' But there was a broadgrin on Amanda's face, and the third formers knew that she would never be a tyrantagain.

that is Ί 'Oh. Amanda. good news!' said Felicity. Darrell. must write and tell She'll be absolutely thrilled for you.' leg?' askedJune, who had even more interest 'How's the than the sixth former. She, more than anyone, the others in had clashed with the old Amanda. But June's act life had created a saving her bond between bravery in them, and now they had a great mutual respect for one another.

'Getting better,' said Amanda. 'My parents made sure spent the holidays and, although that I resting it nearly really has drove me mad at the time, it done me good. I still shan't any sport for bit, but be playing а says that there has been no permanent damage. doctor Anyway, that's quite enough aboutme I suppose you've the new Head Girl?' all heard that Kay here is

'Yes. and I'm going to have a jolly hard time living up laugh. She was a the previous one,' said Kay, with a to dark girl with warm brown tall, eyes, a humorous face and friendly girls liked manner. The younger her enormously a that she would be and felt certain a worthy Darrell. successor to

third formers their way, Susansaid to As the went on 'Well, I Felicity, think Miss Grayling has made two jolly good who will head of choices there.l wonder be the form?'

'I expect we'll find out tomorrow,' said Felicity. 'I wouldn't be surprised if it was you, Susan.'

Her friendlaughed. 'That's funny, I was just about to say exactly the same aboutyou.'

'Idon't think Miss Peters will choose me,' said Felicity, feeling pleased that Susanthought she would make a good quite certain that she wouldn't the head girl, but be in indecisive sometimes running. Ί can be SO and don't know if would 1 be strong enough to keep people like June in order.'

mistresses have a 'Even the hard time keeping June in order!' chuckled Susan. Ί they will say, perhaps make *her* head of form! There's doubtthat she would the no make a strong leader.'

'True. But she would lead us all into trouble!' said Felicity. Then she gave a sigh. 'I expect it will be

Veronica. After all, she has already been in the third for a term.'

'I'd forgotten all about Veronica!' said Susanin dismay.

'Blow, we shall have a miserable time of it if she's head of the form.'



The first night

A most delicious supper had been laid out in the dining-room. Each of the long tableswas set with big plates

of cold meat, bowls of salad and delicious, buttery potatoes bakedin their jackets. There was the most scrumptious-looking fruit salad with cream for afters and, as the girls entered, their eyes lit up.

Two people were already seated the third-form at table. One was Mam'zelle Dupont, one of the school's two mistresses, and the other was Veronica French Sharpe. The girls eyed her little warily, but Veronica a eager to good impression on was on make a Amv her best 'Hallo' behaviour and greeted them with a cheery and a wide smile.The third formers looked surprised but the girl had that perhaps decided thinking to turn over new leaf, and determined to chance a give her а smiled back. Veronica glanced at the two new girls, noting that one of them was laughing and jokingwith June. That must Freddie. so the girl with the straight, shiny hair and be aloof expression must be Amy. She was rather standing from the others and, although she would slightly apart never have admitted it, little lost they all feeling a as seated themselves. So when Veronica touched her arm and way, 'You must be said in friendly new. Why don't you a mine?' have the seat next to she felt extremely grateful.

cried plump 'Ah, back mes petites!' little welcome Mam'zelle Dupont, around. 'How good it smiling is to all again – Felicity, Pam, Julie – ah. see vou Susan. and the dear Nora! I have some new girls, also. that we see The good Miss Potts told me you,' went on to expect Mam'zelle. 'And she told me your names. 1 know that one of called Winifred, and that -' you is

'It's Freddie, Mam'zelle, not Winifred,' June corrected her, helping herself to a jacketpotato.

'Always you interrupt, June,' said Mam'zelle, looking put out. 'And I know that you are pulling my foot, for Freddie is a boy's name.'

'You mean pulling your leg, Mam'zelle,' said June, with a grin, as the others giggled. 'But I'm not, honestly. She really is called Freddie – aren'tyou, Freddie?'

Freddie nodded. 'It's true, Mam'zelle. People only call me Winifred if I'm in trouble.'

Mam'zelle that this girl lt very odd to seemed should want to be known by a boy's name, but she had been teaching at Malory Towers long enough know that English girls could be very eccentric indeed. So to she accepted this with a shrug and said, 'Ah well, I should like think that you were in trouble, so you to not shall call you Freddie. And you, ma chère.' She Amy, with a smile. You have an unusual name too, turned to have you not?'

'Not really, Mam'zelle,' answered the girl, looking puzzled. 'My name is Amy.'

'Ah yes, but your surname, he is unusual,' said Mam'zelle. 'Miss Potts told me. Now, what was it again? Something from one of your English nursery rhymes.'

Mam'zelle frowned she tried to remember, while the as third formers looked perplexedly at one another and Amy said, 'But my has nothing to do with a surname rhyme. lt's Rvder-' nursery

'Ah yes, I have it!' cried Mam'zelle, banging her hand down on the table and making everyone jump. 'It is Ryder-Cockhorse!'

third formers simply roared with laughter The who couldn't this. All Amy, of course. except bear to be made fun of, even unwittingly, and flushed angrily. Even sourpuss Veronica had to hide a smile, but hide it she did, as didn'twant Amy to think that she she certainly was laughing at her.

'To see a fine lady on a white horse,' murmured June, once the laughter had died down. 'Only Amy would never

ride a white horse, because she wouldn't be able to stand the smell.'

Of course, this made the third-form table erupt again, the girls' laughter so noisy that Miss Potts, at the head of the first-form table, glared across at them, and Felicity said, 'We'd better keep the noise down. Potty looks annoyed.'

'Miss Potts,' explained June, seeing that the two new girls looked puzzled. 'She's the head of North Tower. Quite a decent sort, but she doesn't stand any nonsense. That'sher, over at the first-form table.'

Freddie glanced across and caught beadyeye the of a rather stern-looking mistress, and looked away No, Freddie decided, she definitely wouldn't again hastily. like to side of Miss Potts! get on the wrong

'And over there,' said June, nodding towards the fourth form's table, 'is Mam'zelle Rougier, the other French mistress.'

Mam'zelle Rougier was tall, and as thin as Mam'zelle Dupont was plump. She also looked rather bad-tempered, and the fourth formers at her table seemed a little glum and subdued.

'Thank goodness we'vegot Mam'zelle Dupont at our table,' June, lowering her voice. 'She has went on hot temper at times, but she's good fun and a splendid person to play tricks on. Quite unlike all.' Mam'zelle Rougier, who has no sense of humour at Mam'zelle meanwhile, had returned Dupont, to the vexed question of Amy'ssurname, saying, ʻlt is a most Ryder-Cockhorse. I unusual name. do not think that I before.' have heardit

'Actually it's Ryder-Cochrane,' said Amy rather stiffly, as muffled giggles broke out again.

Seeing that Amy'sfeathers were seriously ruffled, Veronica seized her chance and murmured in a low tone, 'You mustn't mind Mam'zelle. She doesn't mean to offend —

it's just that she gets thingsmixed up sometimes. As for the rest of the third formers well, I wouldn't take much of them either. notice They have a very childish sense of ľm afraid. Here –' humour, she passed plate a of cold meat to Amy. 'Do help yourself. The suppers here jolly good, and I'm sure you must be hungry.' are

Amy was hungry, and she took the plate with a word of thanks and faint smile. Encouraged, Veronica a began the new girl conversation. to engage in asking her great many questions, showing enormous a interest in her her admiration quite clear. Pleased and making answers, that there was at least one person in this horrid school with the who appreciated her, and delighted opportunity to boast about herself, Amy began to thaw and chatted quite pleasantly with Veronica.

side of the June, on the opposite table, was busily girls and mistresses to pointing various an interested out Freddie, sharp ears picked snatches of but her up didn't know better. two girls' conversation. lf she June would have felt quite certain that Veronica was sucking Amy because of her wealthy background. But uр to Veronica hadn't been in the dormitory earlier and had only just met Amy, so she couldn't possibly know anything really *had* changed abouther. Perhaps Veronica her ways, and was being kind and unselfish in putting Amy at her ease. somehow June doubted it. But

Mam'zelle Dupont, was quite taken in. however, Veronica her favourites, but watching had never been one of her now, make this new girl she went out of way to as her French mistress began think that she welcome, the to might little harshly. have judged her a

The bold, wicked June also seemed to be looking after Freddie, and Mam'zelle Dupont smiled to herself. Ah, they might be eccentric, with their jokes and tricks, and their

strange names, but these English girls were good and kind at heart!

Nora, with her fluffy blonde hair and round, blue eves, one of pets. Whenshe covered was her mouth suddenly stifle a yawn, Mam'zelle Dupont to cried, wonder. 'You are tired, ma And 1 petite! no am sure that you must all be fatigued, after your long journeys and the excitement of your first day back at school. As soon as you have finished your meal, you shall go straight bed!' to There was an immediate outcry at this, of course. fact. the girls felt pleasantly tired and wouldn't beat ln sorry when bedtime for came.But as going up straight after tea, when it early, and there was still was so SO much catch up on, and they wanted make this gossip to to precious first day last as long as possible – why, it was unthinkable!

'Only the first-form babies bed straight after go to rather loftily. 'We third formers are tea,' said Felicity, allowed stay up until nine o'clock usually, to although have to to bed at eight on the first night. we go before And I, for one, am not going up second a have to!' we

until eight they did, although And stav many of up third formers felt their eyelids drooping, and Nora almost nodded off on the sofa in the common-room and had nudged awake bv Julie. to be

'Come on, sleepyhead,' said Julie, hauling the protesting Nora to her feet. 'The bell for bedtime has just sounded, and you can't go to sleep here!'

'Isav, look at those two,' said Felicity to Susan, as they walked upstairs together. ʻlt if seems as they have become firm friends already.'

Ahead of them walked Amy and Veronica, still deep in conversation, and Susanlaughed, saying, 'It seems right, somehow, that the two most unpopular girls in the form have

with one another. Although I'm teamed up not sure whether this friendship will be good for eitherof them.But Veronica seems determined stick to Amy like glue!' to

'Ratherlike Bonnie stuck to me, during the holidays,' said Felicity, with a wry smile.

'Ah dear little Bonnie,' said Susan, with a yes, grin. Ί should think you were as glad to see the back of her as she was to back of me!' see the

Susan had come to stay with Felicity for a week in the holidays, and the visit had not been a great success. quite overcome with jealousy, had taken an Bonnie. instant dislike and had done everything possible to Susan, feel unwelcome. make her

'As though she were my best friendand you were the one trying to come between us, instead of the other Felicity round!' an exasperated had complained after a particularly trying afternoon, during which Bonnie had been sensible rude to Susan. Luckily, the Susan had openly refused to be drawn into a quarrel and had merely laughed at Bonnie.

goodness, how she disliked me!' Susansaid now as 'Mv dormitory. 'I couldn't help feeling a they entered the little sorry for her, though. lt can't be much of а life not being able to go to school, and make friends, and share in all the happy, jolly times that most schoolgirls have.'

'Oh, Bonnie quite well enough to is come to school now,' said Felicity. mother won't let her. 'But her think that Mrs Meadows Honestly, Susan, is quite the ever met. If silliest ľve she didn't fuss over woman Bonnie, and spoil her SO, she might turn out auite to be decent.'

'Well, thank goodness our parents had the sense to splendid school like Malory Towers,' said us a Ί Susan. simply can't imagine being anywhere else!'

Swiftly, the girls changed into their pyjamas, brushed their teeth, and climbed into their cosy beds, but June and Freddie, who were both thoroughly overexcited, continued to talk after lightsout.

'Can't you two shut up and go to sleep?' groaned a tired Nora. 'I'd just dropped off and now you've woken me up again.'

'Sorry, Nora,' said June. 'We didn't mean to disturb you.' later, Freddie's voice could be heard again, But. moments followed by a loud snort of laughter from June'sbed. and Veronica frowned herself the in to darkness. head of As she was to be the form, it was that the two girls obeyed about up to her to see the rule talking after lights-out. It would be well. she no as decided, to start as she meant continue, and show to these two that she wasn't going to stand any nonsense, so and said crisply, 'You two -Veronica sat up in bed June and Freddie! Get to sleep at once. You both know very is allowed well that no talking after lights-out, and if shall report vou disobev 1 to Miss you Peters!'

Now, Nora wasn't the only one who had been getting little tired of June and Freddie's chatter. for several of the girls felt annoyed at the pair for keeping them awake. In fact, Susanhad been on the verge of telling quiet herself. them to be But none of the third formers take orders from Veronica until it intended to was announced that she was head-girl, and they rebelled at once.

'Sneak!' called out Julie.

'You're not head of the form,' said Susan. 'You've no right to tell us what to do.'

'Besides, I heardyou whispering to Amy after lights-out!' added Felicity indignantly. 'And you only stopped because she fell asleep. Hypocrite!'

Veronica's cheeks flushed a deep angry red, and how dare you speak to melike that! hissed, 'Felicity Rivers, of this form and I the senior member am my duty -' consider it

'Pooh!' June interrupted her rudely, sitting bolt upright in bed. 'You don't have a sense of duty, Veronica. What you do have is an inflated sense of your own importance. Well, let vou, just because vou've already me tell spent a doesn't the third form, it make you senior term in to rest of and it certainly doesn't the us, give you the right start dishing out orders. Only the head-girl to will be able to do that, and very much doubtthat it will be you! Miss Peters knows you too well.'

Smarting. Veronica opened her mouth make an to angry retort, but just then the girls heardthe sounds of the landing, and Miss footsteps on and the door opened Potts stood silhouetted in the doorway.

more talking!' 'Come along now, girls, no she commanded briskly. Ί realise that you're all excited to be back together again, but vou'll be fit for nothing in the don't get your sleep. Who is head morning if of you the dormitory? Oh, no one, I suppose, the head-girl of as the form hasn't been announced yet. Well, Pam, as vou were head-girl last term, l am putting you in charge for tonight, and will leave it to you to deal with anyone the rules. Goodnight, everyone.' who breaks

'Goodnight, Miss Potts,' chorused the girls, snuggling down into their beds as the door closed behind the mistress.

right, girls,' came Pam'slow, pleasant voice. 'Miss Potts is ʻAll quite right. We shall all too woolly-minded be to class tomorrow if we don't get concentratein sleep soon, to SO more noise.' no

'Whatever you say, Pam,' said June meekly, making the others grin to themselves. Apart from Veronica, who scowled fiercely. She knew what was behind this sudden — and

of meekness June's most unusual _ display on part, of was her way of that she course. lt saving would Pam'sleadership, but not accept Veronica's. For the girl's mind. Could June have been first time, a doubtcrept into the right in saying that Miss Peters would not make her head of the form?It was true that Veronica had never been one favourites, but would of the mistress's surelyMiss Peters one of these silly kids head of not consider making the form over her? Why, the idea was ridiculous, for none of them fit to lead the others. Not the bold, brazen was June, the scatterbrained Nora, that was certain. Pam had nor had her turn, while Julie was so alreadv in wrapped up that horse of hers that she was quite unable to concentrateon anything else. As new girls, Amy and Freddie wouldn't be in the running, whichleft that cheeky little Felicity Riversand her goody-goody friendSusan. Veronica curled her lip scornfully. As if eitherof them had the of characteror of necessary strength the air authority to lead the third form!

Having ruled out her new form-mates as rivals, Veronica felt settled down contentedly under happier and the bedclothes. Miss Peters good deal of sense and had a common would allow her personal feelings to not influence her Veronica sure. The do what decision. was mistress would third form was best for the and what was best, thought Veronica, would for her made head-girl. be to be



The newhead-girl

Amy'sfirst full day at Malory **Towers** did not get off to good start. Veronica watched in admiration as thenew girl brushed out her shining hair, before deftly braiding it into a thick plait, which she secured with brown а ribbon, to match the school uniform.

'You do look lovely, Amy,' gushed Veronica. 'How I wish my hair shonelike yours.'

'Idon't think that even I could look lovely in this dreadful complained Amy, frowning at herreflection uniform,' in the 'The one I mirror. had Highcliffe at Hall was SO were allowed much nicer. We to wear

'Don't tell me,' interrupted June, who had been listening quite unashamedly. 'You were allowed to wear ball gowns and tiaras to breakfast.'

'Iwas talking to Veronica, not to you,' retorted Amy stiffly, scowling at June, before turning to little jewellery cabinet. rummage in box on her a From this, she selected charm bracelet. 'L a pretty say, Amy, you're not going to wear that in class, are vou?' asked Veronica, frowning.

'Of course,' replied Amy. 'Why shouldn't I?'

'Well, we're not really supposed to wear fancy jewellery,'

Veronica told her. 'Miss Peters will probably make you take it off.'

The listening third formers grinned at one another, each of them thinking the same thing: that it was most unusual for Veronica to warn another that she girl was would have held her likely to into trouble. Normally she get

there was nothing that gladdened her tongue, for spiteful more than watching someone else into a nature get good row. But was determined to become Veronica Amy'sfriendher *best* friend– and that meant that she couldn't stand by and allow her to incur the wrathof Miss simply stop her. Not that Amy Peters without at least tryingto seemed very grateful, for she merely shrugged and the braceletaround fastened her wrist, saying haughtily, **'**Whata stupid rule! I daresay Miss Peters won't even jewellery.' notice that I'm wearing

'Rings on her fingers,' chanted June in a sing-song voice. 'And bells on her toes. She shall be punished for wearing those!'

other third formers roared with laughter The at but Amy turned June's cleverrhyme, brightred. It would be just too humiliating if Miss Peters did send her of class to bracelet. Reluctantly, she remove her turned away from the others and took it off, it placing back in the box.

Veronica noticed that the girl had placed а effort to cabinet and, in placate photograph on her an her, said brightly, 'Are those your parents? My goodness, isn't your mother beautiful? And how handsome your father looks.'

The woman in the photograph certainly was verv beautiful, she didn'tlook much like Amy, as she though was small, turned-up nose and big dark, with a green eyes. It was obvious that Amy had inherited her looks from her father, most distinguished-looking man. His features were very similar his daughter's and he had same fair to the hair. this Amy cheered uр at once at praiseof her said, 'They are good-looking couple, aren't parents and a half-term, Veronica. they? You must meet them at 1 say, wouldn't it be super if parents hit it off with my vours?'

Veronica listened to this with mixed feelings. On the one hand, she couldn't wait to meet Amy's beautiful mother and handsome, wealthy father. But the other, she was quite unable to picture her own parents hard-working. down-to-earth becoming friends with Ryder-Cochranes. Why, they had nothing in common with fact, Veronica's parents them at all! In could prove to bit of embarrassment to her athalf-term. be а an mind working swiftly, she wondered if Her could think of a way to put them off coming.

'Amy!' called Pam. 'It's almost breakfast time, so you'd better tidy your nightclothes away and make your bed before we go down.'

Amy, who had never made a bed in her life, looked rebellious, but the ever-willing Veronica was at herside in a flash, saying, 'You fold your pyjamas up neatly, Amy, and I'll make your bed for you.'

'Oh, no you won't!' said Pam firmly. 'Amy is quite capable of making her own bed, Veronica.'

'Really, Pam, I don't see what business it is of yours if I choose to help Amy,' retorted Veronica.

'It's my business because Miss Potts made me head of the dormitory – even if it is only temporary.

And I don't see why Amy should get out of doing her own chores.'

Pam might be placid and good-natured, but she took her responsibilities very seriously indeed!

Pam, I 'But really don't know how to make a bed protested Amy, looking Pam beseechingly. properly,' at Ί fold the don't have the faintest idea how to corners you have done. neatly, as the rest of

Can't Veronica just show me how to do it now, then tomorrow I can do it myself?'

'Very well,' agreed Pam. 'But be quick, both of you, or we shall be late for breakfast.'

that Pam did smirk Amy turned away, so not see the her face. Veronica already boasted her about on had to how she was certain to be made head-girl, whichmeant that she would head of also be the dormitory. And if she chose to do Amy'schores for her. nobody would have the authority stop her. to

'Well done, Pam,' said Susanin a low voice. 'We're all going to have to sit on Amy good and hard if she's to settle down at Malory Towers.'

there's point in 'Yes, but no the rest of us trying if Veronica get some sense into her goes and undoes all to roundafter Amy, and telling good work by running our said Felicity, with a how wonderful she is,' frown, she as watched Veronica making Amy'sbed. 'I simply can't understand it.

Veronica the very last person ľd have expected she's really going out ofher put herself out for anyone, but Amy.' way to nice to be

'Isn't it obvious?' said June, with a sneer. 'Veronica wantsto be friends with the wealthy, wellconnected new girl. Horrid little snob!'

'Iwould agree with you, June,' said Pam, thoughtfully. Ίf for fact that Veronica struck up it wasn't the friendship with Amy over tea yesterday – and she had no idea then that she is wealthy and wellconnected.'

'That's right,' said Susan. 'Perhaps Veronica has genuinely taken a liking to Amy and really wants to be a true friend to her.'

'Idon't believe that Veronica has ever been a true her life!' declared friendto anyone in the forthright June. if it's 'She's only ever nice to people her advantage.' to 'That's a bit harsh, June!'protested Felicity. Ί know that Veronica hasn't done much to give anyone here а good opinion of her, but she can't be all bad.'

June laughed. 'That's typical of you, Felicity.

Always trying to see the good in people – even when there isn't any!'

And somehow June made it sound as if trying to see the good in people was a fault, and that Felicity

was being rather naive and silly. Felicity felt put out, and was grateful when Susan laid a hand on her shoulder and aboutthat, June, for said, 'You should be pleased means that Felicity even manages to see a little good in vou!'

that, and went off laughed at speak to June to while Susansaid in low voice to Freddie. a Felicity, **'Never** mind what June says — I think it's jolly good thing that a you're always willing to believe the best of people.'

'Perhaps,' said Felicity, with a wry expression. 'But it's not always easy. Especially with people like Veronica and Amy – and sometimes even June herself!'

Kay Foster approached the third-form table as the girls were finishing breakfast, and said in her friendly way, 'Hallo, kids. Freddie and Amy, can you come along to Miss Grayling's room with me, please?'

'Goodness, don't say we're in trouble already!' exclaimed Freddie, look of dismay her face. a on 'Don't worry, Freddie,' laughed Felicity. 'You're not Miss Grayling in trouble. always sees the new girls on first day, and says a them.' the few words to sure you'll find what she has to say most

inspiring,' said Veronica to rather Amy. 'I apprehensivelooking know that her words had me. I'll come and wait outside quite an effect on the Head's room for you, Amy, so that you don't get lost class.' on the way to

Kay marched off with Veronica As and the new girls, June turned to the others and said in a low voice, goodness Veronica's gone. Listen, 'Thank everyone, I have of tricks in box the dorm that my cousin, Alicia, gave me. a 1 haven't opened it yet, SO. we have a little as time to spare before lessons, shall we nip back up and look?' take a

'Ooh yes, let's!' cried Nora, clapping her handstogether excitedly.

'That would be super,' said Felicity, pushing her chair back and getting to her feet.

Jack,' said Julie, stables 'Ihave to go to the to see frowning. 'Blow! 1 would have loved to see your tricks. Can't we and see them at break-time?' go up

'No. because 1 want to open the box when Veronica's not around,' said June, shaking her head. 'If to disappearing off dorm at sees us all the breaktime she's bound to guess something'sup and come snooping.'

'Anyway, Julie, you saw Jack *before* breakfast!' pointed out Pam. 'I'm sure he's not going to pine away because you don't visit him *after* breakfast as well.'

'Yes, vou can go and spoil him at break-time instead,' come and see said Susan. 'Do June's tricks with us Julie – it will be such fun!'

So Julie allowed herself to be persuaded, and the girls made their way swiftly up to the dormitory, where June pulled a cardboard box from beneath her bed.

'It's a pity Freddie can't be here,' said Felicity. 'She strikes me as the sort of girl who enjoys a good joke or trick.'

is,' grin. 'Freddie 'She said June, with a was the form joker at her old school, and we're planning to team up this term.' sorts of pranks and play all

This sounded good, and the girls exchanged excited glances.

'I'll have to slip up here with her later,' said June, 'and show her what's in the box. Now, let's get the lid off and see what we have!'

The girls crowded roundJune, and there were a great many 'oohs' and 'aahs' as she pulled the items from the box.

'Good old Alicia!' exclaimed Felicity, as she picked up an extremely realistic-looking rubber

spider. 'My word, we can certainly give Mam'zelle Dupont a fright with this!'

most interesting item by But the far was a bar of ordinary-looking white soap, wrapped perfectly in pink tissue with a label attached to it. As paper, the others looked at it. puzzled, June began read the writing to on the label. Then she gave a crow of laughter and said, 'Listen this! Whoever uses the soap will find that their to face and handsturn a brown dirty, muddy about half hour after they've washed. Oh, how super!'

'I should say!' chuckled Nora. 'We'll have to decide who to play it on.'

'Ithink I've already decided,' said June with a wicked grin. 'Can't you just picture dear Amy walking our into breakfast, completely unaware that she looks as if she's wearing a mudpack?'

The girls could picture it very well indeed, their eyes lighting up as they grinned at one another. 'Do it tomorrow, June!'begged Julie, but June shookher

'It's save tricks soon. I always think it's best to too until the few weeks old term is a and we're beginning bored.' to feel

'Good idea,' said Pam, as June shoved the box back underher bed. 'That will give us something to look forward

head.

Now, we'd better get a we'll be to. move on, or late and that won't impress Miss Peters at all!'

girls made their way to of one the long buildings that connected the and foundtheir new classroom. four towers, and Veronica were already Amy, Freddie there, as were some the girls from the other three towers. The NorthTower them cheerily, then seated themselves.June was girls greeted bag herself to seethat Freddie pleased had managed to seat in the coveted back row, and quickly took the next to her. Felicity and Susantook the desks in front one of them, while Pam, Nora and Julie foundthree seats together aisle from the others. the Veronica and Amy sat across of each other, at the front of the next to course, classroom, and as more girls from the South, East and West the desks gradually filled up. There was Towers came in, a girls chattered away to babble of noise as the one then Anne from West Tower, who was standing another, guard at door, suddenly hissed, 'Shh! Miss Peters is coming.' Αt once the noise ceased. the third formers getting to their feet as a mannish young woman with short

hair and rosy complexion entered. а

girls,' she said crisply, 'Good morning, pile setting the of booksshe carried down on the desk. Miss Peters,' the girls politely 'Good morning, replied they eyed her with interest. as

good sort,' Darrell 'Miss Peters is had told а Felicity. 'But she has temper. She won't stand for anyone a playing the fool in her lessons, and if there's one thing that makes her angry, it's people who try to dupe or deceive her.'

She now, thought looks perfectly pleasant and friendly the Felicity, as mistress smiled roundat her class. 'Sit girls,' she ordered down. in her rather deep voice. 'Now, before making timetables we get down to and

giving out books, I am sure that you are all eager to know who is to be head of the form.'

Amurmur of excitement rippled roundthe room and Veronica immediately sat up straight in her seat, a rather smug look on her face.

look at Veronica,' whispered June to Freddie. 'My 'Just goodness, I'd love to see that smirk wiped off her face!' Miss Peters. glare 'Quiet, please!' commanded with a very difficult June's direction. 'Well, this was a in decision to make,but I have discussed the matter with both Miss Potts and Miss Parker. that and we have decided the head-girl of the third form is to be Felicity Rivers.'

Indeed. had been a very difficult decision. Miss it Peters and Miss Parker, who was the second-form mistress and knew the girls very well, had narrowed it down to Susan and foundit very difficult and Felicity, to choose between them.

'Ifeel that both of them would make excellent head-girls,' Miss Parker had said. 'They are both sensible, trustworthy and kind-hearted. I really don't see how we are going to decide.'

Fortunately, at that moment, Miss Potts had entered mistresses' common-room, and Miss Peters had asked her opinion, saying, 'As Head of North Tower, you probably know both girls far than Miss Parker and I. What do better vou think?'

Miss Potts had sat down, remaining silent and thoughtful for few moments. Then, at last, she spoke. 'There is doubtthat Susanhas more confidence in herself no than However, I have always felt that Felicity. young Felicity was a little overshadowed by older sister. her Darrell popular, and such a success Malory was so at Towers especially in her last year, when she was Head that Felicity Girl – was always known her little sister as

and never really came into her own. She has always been less sure of herself than Darrell, and less forthright in her she very strong, opinions. Yet is determined little а and, now that Darrell character is gone, I think that the time has come for Felicity to shine.I feel that if she was made head-girl she would certainly seize the opportunity and make the most of it. And I think that she has а offer the school. Of course,' great deal to she added, 'Susan would also make a fine head-girl, and the decision must be Miss Peters.' yours,

'Ithink that you are right, Miss Potts,' said Miss Parker, who had been listening to the mistress most attentively. 'With little more confidence, I that Felicity believe could be a Darrell was. She certainly as big success here as her.' good stuff in

'Very well,' Miss Peters said. 'Felicity Riversit is then.' afraid that Veronica Sharpe is going to bitterly disappointed,' said Miss Potts drily. 'She is quite hers.' that the position is certain

'It never entered head to make Veronica head-girl,' mγ laugh. 'I'm afraid said Miss Peters, with a rather scornful learn before that young lady has lot she a to can ever be given a position of responsibility. She would have been a most unpopular choice!'

extremely popular Felicity, however, was an choice, classroom resembled a bear garden for a few and the third formers congratulated noisily. moments, the her as

'Well done, Felicity!'

'Jolly good show! You'll make a super head-girl.'

'My word, won't your parents be proud?'

June, delighted to look of see the horror on Veronica's face, cheered loudest of all. leaning forward slapping Felicity back. 'Congratulations, Felicity! and on the you.' ľm SO pleased for

two girls remained silent. One, of Only course, Veronica, who felt humiliated beyond words. To think that Felicity Rivers. of all people, had been given the that she badly for herself. Veronica honour had wanted SO would almost have preferred that dreadful June as headgirl! And worst of all, she had actually boasted to Amy last night that she was going to be head-girl. Why hadn't she kept her mouth shut?

The other girl who was unable to speak was Felicity herself! For thought that she had а moment, she misheard Miss Peters the mistress announced her as Then Susanhad given her hug that almost pulled name. a had of her seat, the cheering and yelling her out erupted, and she had realised that it was true. She, Felicity the third form! Felicity felt that she Rivers, was head of would burst with pride and happiness. She must write to her and Darrell, of parents tonight _ and course them the goodness, how thrilled and tell news!My proudthey would all be! And what a super term this was going to Felicity vowed silently that she would the be. be best any form had ever had head-girl even better than Darrell! Nothing would while she go wrong was in charge, nothing bad would happen and there would be no problems whatsoever.

But Felicity was wrong. The third form's problems were just about to begin!



A shock for Felicity

The first week of term simply sped by. Malory Life at busy and happy, was full, Towers SO that the girls whichto boredor scarcely had a moment in be

homesick. But there were irritations too. Amy remained aloof stand-offish, looking down on everyone other than Veronica, graciously allowed friend. whom she to be her As for herself, Veronica she had become more sour than ever since Felicity had been made head-girl.

'The two of them seem to have formed their own exclusive little club,' remarked Nora one day.

'Yes, though 1 don't know why Veronica thinksshe's so of us,' said Julie rather indignantly. superior to the rest Ί last half-term and they are saw her people ordinary.'

'Veronica association with Amy,' has become superior by drawled June. 'Or thinks she has. And at any rate, she the more time the two of them spendtogether, the worseit's going get.' to

Felicity was agreement with June over this, in hearty best to and did her get the two girls to mix more with the rest of the form, but her efforts were in vain. Felicity spoketo Susanaboutit at tea one afternoon.

'Ireally feel that it's responsibility to my do something about them,' she low voice. 'They're said in a awfully bad for one another. Veronica just encourages Amy in belief that she's a cut above the rest of us. And as long Amy for she has her friend. Veronica won't attempt as with the become rest of us and will to mix even more unpopular.'

'Yes, but what can you do?' asked Susan reasonably. 'You can hardly order them not to be friends.'

something,' said Felicity, 'No. but shall think of Ι with determined set her chin, and Susan grinned. She to а didn't doubt for friendwould do a minute that her whatever she mind to, for she had always known set her that Felicity was a strong character. And now that she was head of the form, it was coming to the fore.

'Isay, look!' cried Nora, who was sitting opposite them. 'Miss Potts has just with a new girl. first former, appeared Α she's only a look of her, for little scrap.' bν the

'Poor little soul,' said Pam, sympathetically. Ήt must be awfullv nerve-wracking to walk into a room full of strangers. Still, the first formers are a decent bunch they'll daresay and I look after her.'

Felicity and Susan, who had their backs to the door, turned curiously to look at the newcomer. bite of Felicity, who had just taken a fruit cake, choked, while Susangasped.

'Bonnie!' said Felicity in horror. 'Susan, it's Bonnie!'

'Yes, I can see that,' murmured Susan, sounding less than thrilled.

the wide-eyed little girl standing next to Miss Potts was none other than Felicity's neighbour, Bonnie Meadows. At she caught sight of that moment, Felicity, and gave a squeal of excitement, before high-pitched daintily way through tablesto join the third form. weaving her the

girls stared The her in astonishment she at as cried, 'Felicity! Aren't you surprised to see me?' Then, without giving Felicity a chance to reply, she went on rapidly, Ί missed you so much that I was quite miserable, then Daddy came home from one of his trips and was quite worried aboutme, because he could see abroad old self. talked that I wasn't mγ So he Mother into letting that I could be with me come here, so you, telephoned Miss Grayling and fixed it then he all up in trice.' a

Bonnie at last stopped to take a breath and June. who had been watching with a look of wicked amusement shocked her face, and had noted the expressions on on and Susan's faces, said sweetly, 'How nice for Felicity you, have another friendhere. Do introduce us!' Felicity, to

'This is Bonnie Meadows,' said Felicity, pulling herself together. 'She's a neighbour of mine at home.'

'Well, that's excellent,' said Miss Potts, who had followed Bonnie over and arrived iust in time to hear this. will look after her, 'Bonnie feel quite at home with you to shall leave it Felicity. ı to you to help her settle in.' own feelings side for Felicity, putting her to one introduced Bonnie moment, quickly the the to other third formers. and to Mam'zelle Dupont, who was extremely taken with this angelic-looking little newcomer.

'Susan!' said. 'Please she will you to the go kitchen them for plate for ask another la and petite Bonnie. could have some more cake, for And perhaps we see that you greedy third formers have eaten it all up SO none left that there is for the poor child. Sit down. ma *chère*,for am sure you must be tired and hungry after your journey.'

As Susan went off do Mam'zelle Dupont to as had asked, Bonnie turned her sweetsmile on the French and thanked Then she slipped mistress her prettily. into the seat that Susanhad iust vacated, beside Felicity, while Pam her of tea. poured а cup

meanwhile, were sizing her The others, up. Nora, who, with her deceptively innocent expression, wide, blue eyes and shock of fluffy blonde hair, was a long-standing favourite of Mam'zelle's, was none too pleased to see the French mistress fussing over this new girl. Pam thought her rather while Veronica considered her sweet, to auite be silly and childish. Most of the others thought that she couldn't too bad if she friendof Felicity's, be was a give her chance. Felicity and were prepared to a and of course, were thoroughly dismayed at this turn of Susan, and poor Susanlooked events, most disgruntled when she from the returned kitchen bearing a tray of cakes and sandwiches.

Susan,' much, 'Thank you so said Bonnie, looking at the girl with round, innocent she up eves as set table. 'Oh dear, have I the down on the tray taken your seat?'

ʻlt matter,' said Mam'zelle Dupont, auite is no hint of failingto the spite behind notice the sweetness. there is chair at second-form 'Susan, an empty the table. Bring it over, and you can sit next to me, then we comfortable.' shall be

Felicity, however, looked decidedly uncomfortable, laugh. She turned her thought June, doing her best not to attention Bonnie and asked, 'Whatschool did to you go to before came here?' you

'Oh. I've never been to school before,' answered curls. 'I Bonnie, tossing back her brown was very ill said that I when I was little, you see, and the doctors school.' delicate was too to go to

'Ah, *la pauvre*!' exclaimed Mam'zelle, her ready sympathy stirred. 'But you are quite well now, *n'est-ce pas*?'

'Oh, yes, Mam'zelle,' said Bonnie. 'And I'm so looking forward to starting school properly, and being with Felicity again.'

'You'll be able to make up a threesome, with Felicity and Susan,' said June, looking every bit as innocent as Bonnie herself. 'Won't that be super?'

Neither Susannor Bonnie looked particularly thrilled idea, while Felicity inwardly. this groaned at She couldn't very well throwBonnie off altogether especially she was head-girl, and it was her duty to as she didn'twant the help her settle in _ but certainly along with her and Susanall the time. tagging Whatever was she to do?

After tea, Felicity and Susantook Bonnie up to the dormitory to unpack her things. Amy was there, searching

through her cabinet for a book, and she glanced up when the others entered.

'There's only one spare bed, Bonnie,' said Susan. 'And it's this one, next to Pam's.'

Bonnie frowned, for she had been hoping to be next but she said nothing Felicity, and began unpacking her to been brought trunk, which had already up by the handyman. She pulled out pretty floralpatterned dress, which she a weekends, and it had brought to wear at caught Amy'seye.

lovely dress!' she said, coming 'Isay, what a over to Ί take a closerlook at it. very similar one that have a mother bought me when we went on holiday my to Paris. Where did you get yours from?'

'Imade it,' replied Bonnie, looking pleased. ʻlt took me simply ages, but didn't mind because I love sewing. well.' made this Look, I one as

clever!' said Amy, the 'Mv word, you are genuine admiration in tone astonishing Felicity and Susan, for her thev had never heard it before. 'These clothes are as beautifully made as the ones Mother buys for me. It must dreadful be to have to make all your own dresses though.'

'Oh. 1 don't *have* to do it,' said Bonnie. Ί told you, I love sewing _ and it's the one thing that I'm really good at. Besides, if make something myself, it that it's truly exclusive and no means one else has а like it.' dress exactly

ʻľd never thought of that before,' said Amy, much Ί struck. do hate looking the SO same as everyone **I**'ll else, don't you? Come over here, Bonnie, and show you some of my things.'

Eagerly, Bonnie followed Amy, and Susantapped Felicity on the shoulder, murmuring, 'I'm not particularly

interested in the latest fashions, are you? Let's leave them to it.'

Felicity nodded and, unnoticed by the other two girls, who were now in the thick of a conversation about clothes, they tiptoed out of the dormitory.

'Well!' said Susan. 'It seems that those two have an interest in common.'

'Yes.' said Felicity, thoughtfully. ʻln fact they're quite many ways. Bonnie's not stuck-up, and she doesn't alike in people like Amy does, but look down on she's awfully spoilt and vain.'

'Yes,' agreed Susan. 'When 1 with you stayed the hols, I noticed that she was always doing her in hair, or admiring herself in the mirror, just as Amv does. I say, Felicity, what are you thinking? I do believe idea!' you have an

'Iwas just wondering if couldn't push Bonnie off we Amy,' answered Felicity, with a grin. 'That would to on kill birds with one stone, for two SO to speak, it would stop Amy and Veronica spending so much time together

'And it would mean that we wouldn't have Bonnie along after us all the time!'Susanfinished for her. 'It's tagging marvellous idea, old will it work? After all, thing, but Bonnie came here because she Amy. And we both know how wanted be with *you*, not to be.' persistent she can

The girls had reached the common-room this two by time, and they sat down together empty sofa. Felicity on an did bit her she always when she was thinking lip, as hard, and at last she said, 'Susan, I've got it! How if made a would it be 1 point of asking Bonnie befriend favour to Amy, as a to me? I tell her that I'm bit concerned that Amy isn't can a

settling in very well, and that I'm worried she's getting too close to Veronica.'

'Bonnie's bound to agree if she thinksshe's doing a favour for you,' cried Susan, her eyes lighting up. 'It's simply marvellous!'

marvellous?' asked June, coming over with Freddie 'What's and sitting down on the arm of the sofa. Felicity and Susantold the two girls their plan, Quickly and June grinned. 'Poor Veronica won't be pleased at to share her precious Amv. And too having Veronica is anything that annoys fine with me! I say, I hope that Bonnie and Amy aren'tgoing to spendtoo long in the dormitory. I wanted to show Freddie my box of tricks before bedtime.'

But just then the door opened, and the two girls came in, chattering nineteen to the dozen.

'Just look at Veronica's face,' whispered Freddie. 'She doesn't look too happy to see Bonnie and Amy on such friendly terms.'

Indeed she didn't! Veronica was sitting in a reading a corner alone, book, and her lips pursed instead of coming over to join her, sat as Amy, at table with Bonnie, and the two began a poring over a fashion magazine together.

'She looks as she's been sucking though on a lemon!' chuckled June. 'Blow, ľd really like stay and to next, but we'd better see what happens go to the up dorm, Freddie, if you want to take a look at those tricks before the bell goes for bedtime. Felicity, if a row breaks out do come and fetch us!'

But there was no row, for as soon as Veronica got up to join the other two, Bonnie left the table and came over to join Felicity and Susan.

'Amy's awfully nice, isn't she?' said Bonnie, ignoring Susan and addressing her remark to Felicity.

'Er yes, awfully nice,' agreed Felicity, with Susan. glance Now was the time to put their а 'Actually, plan into action. Bonnie, was glad to well with Amy, because you getting SO she's a on new girl too and hasn't really got to know many people yet, _′ SO

'But I thought she was friendly with that Veronica girl,' interrupted Bonnie.

is,' she said Felicity. 'And that's the problem. You Veronica let's just say see, Bonnie, is...well, that she very pleasant and she's awfully unpopular with the girl, rest of the form. And I'm afraid that, by spending much SO time with Veronica, Amy is cutting herself off from the rest of and missing the chance make other friendships. us to could be So. if you her friendtoo, really think that it would be very good for and I would be her SO grateful you.' to

The thought of being able to do something to Felicity sparkling look to Bonnie's please brought а at eyes, and she glanced across Amy and Veronica. Amy saw her looking and smiled, but the scowl that Veronica gave her was most unpleasant!

said at 'Yes. 1 see what you mean,' she once. 'Of 1'11 course, be happy to do that for you, Felicity. But favour, ľm only doing it a because you are as real friend, one else could ever take your place with and no me not even Amy.'

Amy, for part, had thoroughly enjoyed her her little chat with Bonnie. lf she was honest with herself, she had and didn'teven like with Veronica, in common the girl Really, had only palled up with her much. she because there was no one else, and Veronica did SO enjoy listening Amy'stales of hergrand home and family. also made Veronica to secret of her admiration, and this was very pleasant no would be nice to have Bonnie to Amy. But it friendtoo, and talk aboutthingslike clothes and hair-dos, a

which Veronica knew very little about. Amy thought that she would Bonnie to make her one of her exclusive get dresses too, just she make her as had got Veronica to Felicity had bed every morning. tickedthe two of them off aboutit first, but last she had realised at at that she couldn't very well force Amy to make her own bed, and that if she put her foot down the girl would probably iust a muddled heap. And that leave it with the sheets in would result in order mark for the whole form, so an the end Felicity gave up, though she wasn't happy in aboutit, as she felt that Veronica and Amy had got over on her.

Bonnie lost no time in getting to work, going up to dormitory as the third formers for Amy in the got ready bed and saying, 'Amy, I simply must show you new way of braiding your hair in the morning. I learned how do it the holidays, and 1 think it to in would really suit you.'

Ί think Amy'shair looks lovelythe way it interrupted is,' Veronica rudely, looking coldlyat Bonnie. Amy brushed aside and said, 'Oh, thank you, Bonnie. But her do tie hair back for school, SO hate having to my and it's always nice to find new way of doing it.' a And soon the two of them were gabbling away about hair-dos, while Veronica stood to one side, looking SO that Felicity felt а little sorry for put out her. But soon it was time for lights-out and Felicity called out, 'Come along, Bonnie, into bed now. You and Amy can in the morning.' vour conversation carry on

Within moments all the girls were in bed, most of them Felicity had expected fallingasleep immediately. Bonnie. who had never been separated from her mother before. to feel homesick, and had dreaded that the girl would cry herself sleep. But there wasn't to a peep out of her, much to Felicity's surprise and relief.

some time before Felicity But herself it was managed sleep, for Bonnie get turning SO to up really shaken her. And what if unexpectedly had her plan with Amy failed? Veronica get the girl chum up to to want Bonnie certainly wouldn't tagging along, and would her best to push her out. Then Bonnie would do lost puppy, Felicity follow around like a making her friendship with Susan difficult, and life at Malory much less enjoyable. Felicity sighed Towers and turned her bed. Blow! Why did Bonnie have to turn up now? over in thingsseemed going so well! Just as to be



The newgirls settle in

The three new girls each settled down in their own way. had quick brain and could have done extremely Freddie а well preferred follow at lessons. but she to June's lead put her brains to work in planning ingenious iokes and and tricks.She quickly became popular with the third form, shared for she was sunny-natured and June's mischievous sense of fun. But she was not quite as bold and daring as June. nor did she have the hardness and that were such flaws in malice the other girl's character. ʻllike tremendously,' said Susanto Felicity her one day, two of the them chatted aboutthe new girls. Ί just as hope that June's don't-care-ishness doesn't rub off on her.'

'Perhaps Freddie's good-heartednesswill rub off on June,' suggested Felicity. 'I must say, she's the only one of the three new girls that I'm really keen on.'

Certainly Amy was far too stuck-up to be popular, foundher while the teachers extremely trying as well, for her work was far of below the standard most of the form. 'Ican't decide whether she's lazy, or stupid, or both!' exasperated Miss Peters said to an Miss Potts mistresses' common-room, in the after she had struggled seem to mark one of Amy'sessays. 'She doesn't understand basic rules of the grammar, she's hopeless maths. at not slightest interested in history, and – according the bit to Miss Maxwell _ won't exert herself at all when it and swimming, for she comes to games doesn't like

getting red-faced and untidy! The only thing Amy is any good at is French.'

Having spent so many holidays in France, Amy did, indeed, speak the language very well, which pleased both Mam'zelles enormously.

Bonnie was not much better than Amy at lessons but, time with adults, had having spent most of her she extremely cleverat 'twisting little become them around her finger', as a disgruntled Nora put it. Poor Nora had had her nose pushed very much out of ioint by Bonnie's arrival. She had taken for granted that she always Mam'zelle Dupont's favourite, making a ioke of it and position to advantage when it suited But using her her. now she foundthat she didn'tlike to see another girl taking her place. Mam'zelle Dupont positively dotedon Bonnie, although her French was poor, while Miss Simmons, the quiet little needlework teacher, was thrilled to find a member of the third form who could sew well. Miss Linnie, the Young, teacher. art mistress. and Mr the singing were also charmed Bonnie, and gave her a veryeasy time by indeed.

But all of teachers were fond of not the Bonnie. The blunt, downright Miss Peters considered her an emptyheaded with far many airs and graces, while little creature, too Mam'zelle Rougier, who made it a habit to dislike those Mam'zelle Dupont, girls who were favoured by remained unmoved tears or bv either Bonnie's her smiles. As for Miss Maxwell, she was driven the games mistress, to distraction by the girl.

Bonnie had never been swimming in her life, and her shrill cold waterfor the as she entered the first time squeal Miss Maxwell. made everyone jump, including

'Bonnie!' she said angrily. 'I thought that you were in difficulties, judging from the noise you're making, but the wateris barely up to your waist!'

Then Susan swam past and accidentally splashed water in Bonnie's face, which caused her to scream again.

'Honestly, 'Baby!' said June scornfully Felicity. to anyone would think that Susanwas trying to drown her. I've a good mind to duck her at least then she wouldn't be able to scream!'

Felicity grinned, but the smile was wiped off her face few moments later when. as she was poised to dive а into the pool, Bonnie let out ear-splittingyell, because an Veronica whether deliberately, or by accident, nobody into her almost knocked was sure barged and of over. Distracted, Felicity lost her balance, and instead swallow-diving gracefully into the pool she did undignified an and almost landed belly-flop on top of very surprised a Pam!

'Ihave had quite enough of this!' said Miss Maxwell, losing her temper. 'Bonnie, really can't allow you third form's disrupt the swimming like this any longer. once and get Please out of the pool at dressed!' get Miss Maxwell,' said Bonnie meekly, 'Yes. hurrying to of climb out the pool.

little smile on Only Felicity caught the tiny the girl's face just before she walk back up turned to to the school, and she gave a gasp.

'The little monkey!' Felicity thought to herself. 'I believe that Bonnie played up deliberately to get out of swimming!'

But, much as she exasperated the as others, Bonnie did have her good points. She was extremely loval considered her those she friends. as Veronica foundout when she made the mistake of criticising Felicity to Amy in front of her.

'Ican't *think* what made Miss Peters choose Felicity
Riversas head-girl,' Veronica said, in a sneering tone. 'I don't think she's a good leader at all, for her character is

far too weak.If you ask me, she only got the position because her sister was Head Girl last year.'

opened her mouth reply, but before Amy to she could speak, a furious Bonnie confronted Veronica, 'You take that back at angrily, once! How dare saying that about Felicity? you say thingslike - 1 think that she's a jolly good head-girl, and she's my friend. and I remarks about her!' have you making spiteful

Both Veronica and Amy were quite taken aback, and who preferred since Veronica _ to make her criticisms people's backs rather than to their faces – behind didn'twant her remarks getting back to Felicity, she did not retaliate.

Julie, who had been sitting But nearby, had overheard the whole conversation. and had, in fact. been about to Felicity's defence when Bonnie leap to stepped in, and the new girl at once went up in her estimation.

Bonnie's loyalty came to the fore again a few days later, in the French lesson – and this time she surprised the whole form!

Mam'zelle Dupont was not in the best of tempers, the first form, who she had just left, had played her up quite dreadfully. Which was unfortunatefor June, who little boredfeeling had also chosen that morning a to act the goat.

Lifting the lid of her desk to hide from Mam'zelle's view, she ripped a page from her exercise book and swiftly folded it into a paperaeroplane.

'Freddie,' she whispered. 'I bet I can hit the back of Amy'shead from here.'

'And I bet you can't!' answered Freddie at once, with a grin. 'She's too far away.'

who sat across Bonnie. the aisle from the two girls, didn'thear this exchange, but she caught the sudden movement June raisedher hand and launched her paperaeroplane on as iourney. Mam'zelle, who had turned its her back to the

class while she wrotesomething on blackboard, remained the blissful ignorance, until a few broke out giggles as the aeroplane glidedgracefully over Amy'shead and, much to hersurprise, landed desk. Amy picked on her the aeroplane up Mam'zelle. who had whipped round upon hearing the giggles, glared at her furiously.

'So!'she said angrily. 'You are so good at French that you can wastethe class's time in this way,

Amy?'

Poor Amy looked horrified and protested, 'But Mam'zelle,
I didn'tthrowthe aeroplane! I was just
_'

'Be silent!' cried Mam'zelle, her black eyes snapping 'How dare you interrupt a bad and coldly. me? You are be disrespectful girl, Amy, and you will punished. Tonight you will learn the whole of the French poem we have iust started, and vou will sav it back to me tomorrow.' Amy, stung by the injustice of this, longed to argue didn'tdare. WhenMam'zelle was in this sort of mood, but she was quite likely to make her learn *two* poems! Why didn't mean beast who had thrown the aeroplane own up get the and back of her out of trouble? In fact June, at the the She might have her class. was about to iust that. faults. do allow someone to but she wasn't aboutto else be punished for her joke. Beforeshe could do SO, however, 'Mam'zelle! It Bonnie got to her feet and piped up, wasn't Amy who threw the aeroplane – it was June. I saw her.'

The third formers, who had very strict ideas abouttelling tales, gasped, looking another in horror, and at one at Bonnie in disgust. Felicity gave a groan. Of never having been to school before, Bonnie course, didn't realise probably that it wasn't done to tell on one's form-mates. And, as head-girl, it was up to Felicity to put her straight!

this true?'said Mam'zelle, looking sternly at the girl. 'And you did not have the courage to tell the truth, even when la pauvre Amy was aboutto be punished?' plane, 'lt's true that I threwthe Mam'zelle,' said June, going very red as she stood up. 'But I was about to own was.' up, truly I

you!' cried Amy, who disliked 'Idon't believe June intensely and felt very grateful to Bonnie for coming to her 'You probably rescue. did it purpose on to get me into trouble.'

'I did not!' said June indignantly. 'It was just a joke, but -'

'Enough!' shouted Mam'zelle, stamping one of little her feet crossly. 'June, *méchante fille,* you will have the punishment Amy. You will that I was going to give the poor, innocent learn that poem, and you will recite it to me tomorrow. And, as second punishment for a not owning up, vou will go an hour early this evening!' bed half to

The was horrified, and smarted girl at the injustice of punishment. But, bold as the second she was, even June did dare to argue with an angry Mam'zelle Dupont, not 'Yes, Mam'zelle,' and took her she said meekly, SO seat again.But she glared angrily at Bonnie, and Felicity. turning in her seat to give June a sympathetic look, saw dear,' she it. 'Oh thought. 'There's going to be trouble!'

Felicity was quite right, for And June marched up to her break-time, a stormy expression on her face at as Felicity, she said, 'I say, what are we going to do allowed about Bonnie? She can't be simply to getaway with sneaking like that.'

'No, suppose you're right and something will have done abouther,' said Felicity. 'There's to be no time now, but we'll hold a form meeting in the common-room at lunchtime.'

So as soon as lunch was over, the members of the third form trooped into the common-room. Only one person was missing, and that was Bonnie.

'Whereis she?' demanded June, her eyes flashing angrily. 'I suppose the little coward doesn't have the courage to face me.'

'Actually, June, Miss Peters wanted to see Bonnie aboutsome prep,' said Amy coldly. 'She'llbe here shortly.'

who didn't want to Felicity, be too hard on Bonnie. was quite glad that the girl wasn't there yet, and she clapped her handstogether for silence, before 'June, I quite understand that vou're but please let's angry, that Bonnie hasn't not forget been to school before and doesn't quite understand all our ways.'

'Oh, vou would stick up for her, Felicity!' harsh note in her voice. 'Just wait until the little sneak a shows face! My word, won't I tell her her what I turning on the waterworks of her! The silly baby is always other – and this over something or time I'll give her something to about!' cry

what Felicity This was exactly was afraid of. June in sight, and little Bonniewould а rage was not a pleasant never be able to stand up her. to

June!'said Felicity firmly. Ί head-girl, and 'No, am this meeting, and Bonnie will be given 1 am running have her say. Then the form as a chance to a decide if she whole will is to be punished, how.' Just then the door opened and Bonnie herself entered. Felicity moved forward to speakto her, but first. Throwing June got in Felicity a mocking look, she and said menacingly, 'What do stalked up to Bonnie vou sneaking Mam'zelle Dupont, mean by me to on little beast?' horrid

The third formers watched with bated breath, some of them hoping that Bonnie would get what she deserved,

that June would others hoping not go too far, and all Bonnie them waiting for burst into noisy of to tears. her face, Felicity Α worried expression on braced herself, if ready to step in the need arose.

But June had underestimated the new girl. Bonnie wasn't used to being spoken to in such a way, and she didn'tlike it one little bit. She didn't much like June either, and was guite shrewd enough to realise that tears would not work with her. So she met the girl's angry gaze 'Don't be ridiculous. said coldly, squarely and of the sort.' nothing

outraged gasp. 'So you're a June gave an liar. well as sneak! The whole form heard Bonnie, as a vou tell Mam'zelle that it was I who threwthat paper aeroplane.'

agreement from the listening There were murmurs of 'Yes, that's right. Amy was but Bonnie said quite calmly, be punished for something you had done, so to and told Mam'zelle the truth. But I did stepped in not sneak! You see, my dear June, sneaking means iust that. going behind someone's back, doing something sly lt means and underhand. I spokeup in front of and secretive the whole form, so I really don't see how there was anything sneaky aboutit!'

Felicity stared at the girl in surprise, for what Bonnie had said was quite true — she *had* told tales, but she had been perfectly open aboutit.

June swiftly recovered and said, 'Very well, perhaps "sneak" is the wrong word in this case, but you did tell on me!'

'Yes, friendout of trouble,' retorted to get a Bonnie, iust as quickly. 'And I must say, June, I better would have thought of you if you had owned up yourself.'

enough There was just scorn in the girl's tone to throwJune on the defensive and she said hotly, 'I was going to Mam'zelle! But tried to explain to own up, as 1 you!' didn'tget the chance, thanks to

'Well, how was I to know that?' said Bonnie, opening her eyes wide. 'I'm the new girl, don't forget. I don't know anything aboutyour character, June – whether you're the kind of who will keep quiet and else person let someone take her punishment, or the kind of who will person come clean and take the consequences.'

'I'm no coward!' said June indignantly. 'I would never let anyone else take the blame for something I had done.'

'l'm very glad to hear it,' said Bonnie with a little smile. 'It's just a pity that you weren't a bit guicker in taking the blame, then all of this unpleasantness could have been avoided. will be - 1 hope that this lesson a you, June. Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to go and speak to Matron.'

And with that, Bonnie sweptfrom the room with her little head held high, leaving behind her a stunned silence. who was doing her best not to Susan, smile, nudged Felicity and nodded towards June. still standing in the middle of the floor, with her mouth open like goldfish. Felicity bit her lip hard to stop herself from Pam and Julie, meanwhile, were clinging laughing. to they tried to stifle their laughter, another as while Nora's shookuncontrollably with mirth. shoulders Even Veronica, iealous she was of Bonnie, had relished seeing as speechless, while Amy had enjoyed June rendered the scene tremendously.

Suddenly, a loud burst of laughter broke the silence, and the girls were amazed to realise that it came from June herself!

'My goodness!' she gasped, when she was able to speak. 'Who would have thought that little scrap wouldbe able to stand up like that? But me she did, and I to admire her for it!' must say that I

And the third formers, joining in June's laughter, admired her for being able to admit so honestly that of someone had got the better her. You could always rely on June to do the unexpected, thought **Felicity** that the wryly, feeling quite relieved was over. But, when row later, she she thought aboutit felt little uneasy. a June had flouted her authority by to allow her, refusing Felicity. the meeting her way, and by confronting to run when she Bonnie had been told not to. And Felicity, anxious to avoid a row, had allowed her toget away with have done in it. What would Darrell that situation, easy, for wondered? The answer that was to Darrell was frank, forthright that she such a person would have had hesitation at all in putting June in her place. Well, if no flout her, Felicity June continued to would have to find of characterto deal with her the strength in the same way. was head-girl, and the third formers needed After all, she lead them, and set example, someone strong to an not from difficult someone who shrank or unpleasant tasks. made a herself, there and then. It Felicity promise to doubtshe would make wouldn't easy, and no mistakes be along the way, but would become she a strong leader.



A dirty trick

sore with Mam'zelle Dupont June felt for some time after the 'aeroplane affair', She had felt as it became known. half an extremely humiliated at going to bed hour before had recited the French the others, and, the next morning, poem to mistress in sulky tone. Mam'zelle, who had the а little sorry that hard begun to feel a she had been so the the tone, and June's on girl, noticed petulant expression, and her heart. Ah, hardened she a bad girl, was this June, and а little punishment would be good for her. Freddie. who admired June tremendously, also felt angry behalf, her friend's and wished that she could on think back at of some way of getting Mam'zelle Dupont. Then June came up Freddie one break-time and, to arm, said, 'I'm bored. taking her Nothing ever happens

around here! I think it's time we played the magicsoap trick on Amy.'

'Super!' giggled Freddie. 'Shall we let the others in on it?'

Junethought for a moment, then said, 'No, let's plan it out between ourselves — just the two of us!

Then we can surprise the others.'

Freddie nodded happily and said, 'But how can we be certain that Amy will use the right soap? If she doesn't it will simply ruin the whole trick.'

'l've thought of that,' said June with a grin. 'Amy has of very expensive soap that her mother sent bar her, а and it looks very like our special soap, so ľm simply switch the bars. She'll never notice the difference, going to else getting and there's fear of anyone no a dirty face, because dear Amy would *never* let anyone else use her precious soap!'

Freddie chuckled. 'Oh, June, it's going to be simply will be marvellous! And the whole of North Tower able to share in the fun, because Amy'sface should start to turn muddy breakfast-time. Whenare we going do at to it?'

'Tomorrow,' answered June. 'I noticed this morning that Amy has almost used up all of old her bar of soap, that she will open the whichmeans new one tomorrow.' said nothing, for Freddie an idea had iust come to idea so breathtakingly bold and daring that June her – an herself might have come up with it. But Freddie decided to nothing June, for she was going to say to give her frienda And she was surprise. going to give the whole of the North Tower biggest laugh it had ever had! Felicity wondered what June and Freddie were up to as the third form dressed the following morning. The two of them whispered together excitedly, and there was a verv

in Freddie's eve! Freddie

asked June

had

mischievous

twinkle

if she could switch soap bars, and June had the agreed. 'Be careful, though,' she had warned. 'Make sure that no see that you one's around when you and do it, put our special soap in exactly the same place as Amy'ssoap was. We don't want her smelling rat!' a

Now the two girls nudged one another and giggled as they watched Amy take the soap from the drawer of her cabinet and walk into the bathroom.

'What *are* you two up to?' asked Felicity, unable to contain her curiosity any longer.

'Why, nothing at all, Felicity,' answered June, making her expression as innocent as she possibly could. 'What makes you think that we're up to something?'

both seem very excited about something,' said Felicity, them suspiciously. 'Come – come clean!' eyeing on Freddie gave a sudden snort of laughter, and said, 'But there's June's twitched lips as she nothing Reallythere isn't. We're clean about, Felicity. to come not vou.' trying to softsoap

This much for Freddie. was too who collapsed to bed fit her of giggles and Felicity, realising in a going to that she wasn't anything get out of the shookher head and went off join Susan. to

June gave Amy a sidelong glance she came out as of the bathroom, but the magicsoap had not begun to do complexion looked work vet, her clean and fresh its and as as ever. But it wouldn't stay that way for long, thought June, smiling to herself. Just you wait, Amy!

But, as breakfast wore on, and Amy'sface stayed the same, June grew impatient.

underher 'Why is nothing happening?' muttered she Freddie. 'Don't that Alicia has given breath to sav me of soap!' dud bar а

'I'm sure she hasn't,' said Freddie confidently. 'In fact,
I think that thingsare just aboutto happen!'

lifted her head sharply, then realised June that Freddie wasn't looking at Amy, but at the head of the table. Mam'zelle Dupont She followed where sat. Freddie's gasp! For Mam'zelle's skin was turning and gave a а dingy brown. muddy,

Pam and Susan, who sat eitherside of the French mistress, couldn't fail to notice the startling transformation Mam'zelle, who was quite well, and they stared at as of her strange appearance, in mingled horror unaware and astonishment. Each of them nudged the girl next to her, and soon the word was passed around the table, and the Mam'zelle, trying desperately to third form were all gazing at laughter. Most of girls guessed, control their the of a course, that June had played trick using the soap that couldn't Alicia had given her, but they simply imagine Mam'zelle to How cleverof she had got use it. her! couldn't how Mam'zelle had got June imagine hold of magicsoap either, and turned Freddie, butbefore the to she could ask for an explanation, came from the a cry table. Mam'zelle had just looked down at head of the her and realised that they were covered hands, in dirty, muddy streaks.

'Mon dieu!' she exclaimed. 'My hands, they are filthy. Yet What can have 1 washed them this morning. caused this?' examined her she Carefully cup, her plate and even her knife and fork, for dirty marks, and this was too much for of Nora, who gave one of her sudden snorts laughter. others were having difficulty in Most of the controlling their well, and people the mirth as at other tablesbegan notice.

look at Mam'zelle Dupont!' word, just 'What*ever* has happened to her?' 'Has she forgotten to have a wash this morning?' Ίt trick! I'll was June!' must be а bet it

Mam'zelle became aware of the whispering and looked most uncomfortable, and Felicity took pity on her.

'Mam'zelle,' she said, when she could trust her voice enough to speak. 'I'm afraid it's not just your hands that are dirty, but your face as well.'

Amy, who always carried a little mirror around with her, fishedit out of her pocket and handed it to the French mistress, who took one look at her reflection and gave a piercing shriek.

by this time and dining-room was in uproar the other mistresses, who had now had a good look at Mam'zelle's dirty face, stared at one another in consternation. Miss Potts took charge, to her feet getting and raising her voice to demand silence.

'That will do!' she commanded. 'Mam'zelle Dupont, I don't understand how you appear to be covered in mud, since you looked quite clean when you first came in to breakfast, but I suggest that you go to one of the bathrooms and wash it off before your first class begins.'

So, summoning up what dignity she could, the little French mistress tottered from the dining-room, and Miss Potts said sharply, 'June!I don't suppose you know anything about this, do you?'

don't, Miss Potts,' answered June quite truthfully, 'No, and Miss Potts stared at her hard, knowing that she play the innocent very well when it suited her. But the bewildered as the others, though girl looked just as didn't seem to find it as funny as they did - in fact, rather she looked angry.

'Well, it's how Mam'zelle Dupont a mystery to me could have entered the room looking as neat as a newpin, and left it looking as though she had been in don't know if mud fight!'said Miss Potts.'I shall ever bottom of Now, girls, please finish your to the it. breakfast quietly, then make your way to your first lesson.'

Potts went back to the first-form table and, as Miss of she was out of earshot, babble lowvoiced as a chatter broke out third formers. among the

'June! It was you, wasn't it?'

'Of course it was. You used the magicsoap on Mam'zelle, didn'tyou?'

'I must say, it was a splendid trick! Did you see poor old Mam'zelle's face?'

'Just like you not to own up.'

This last remark came from Amy, and June replied, 'I didn'town up because it wasn't me who played the trick, I tell you!'

'Then who was it?' asked Felicity, puzzled.

me!' said Freddie gleefully, 'lt was her eyes alight with mischief. Ί did it get back at Mam'zelle for to being SO hard on June the other day.'

Pam chuckled. 'Well, you certainly did that all right! So, do you mean to say that June wasn't in on the trick at all?'

'No,' said June rather shortly. Ί thought that I that Freddie decided was, but it seems to go it Mam'zelle, instead alone and use the soap on of the had chosen.' person we

'You'd better watchyour step, June,' laughed Nora. 'Freddie will be taking over from you as the form joker if you aren't careful.'

June said nothing, and Freddie stared at her, rather puzzled at her coolness. Anyone would think that she wasn't aboutgetting happy her revenge on Mam'zelle Dupont.

fact, June was simply In furious with Freddie for thunder. She was leader stealing her the in their friendship, and wouldn't she have it any other way. She was quite happy for Freddie to play second fiddle to her, and to act as her assistant in planning jokes and

she, June, was the joker of the form and no tricks, but one take that position away from her. Where was going to might have taken pleasure another in getting top girl marksin for class, or her sporting achievements, all June cared about was getting praisefor her jokes and tricks. And she didn't like see Freddie getting a share of that praisenow, to feeling extremely jealous as the others congratulated her.

'Simplymarvellous, Freddie,' said Susan, clapping her on the back. 'But however did you get

Mam'zelle to use the soap?'

'Oh. it was easy, really,' answered Freddie. Ί just bathroom when I slipped into her knew that she was taking prep with the second form, and left the soap there.'

'Heavens, how daring!' said Bonnie, her eyes wide with admiration. 'Whatif someone had seen you?'

'Thank goodness no one did!' said Julie. 'That was the best laugh I've had in simply ages.'

half-eaten porridge June pushed her bowl of appetite completely gone and her thoughts racing. Much as she have to liked the girl, Freddie was going to learn that there was only room for one joker third form. June would in the think of turn Freddie's thoughts have to a way to and in another direction. energies But how?

The answer came to June, quite by chance, one Saturday morning. She walked into the cloakroom to find Felicity and Susan putting their hats and coats and said, on 'Hallo – where are you two off to?'

for 'Oh. thought we'd just walk in the we go a 'lt's gloriously countryside,' answered Felicity. sunny out, although it's little chilly.' a

'Julie's ridden Jack over to Bill and Clarissa's,' put in Susan. 'And Nora and Pam have gone with her, so we thought we might make our way over there too.'

Bill Clarissa old girls who had and were two been in same form as Darrell and Alicia, and they now the ran а not far from the riding stables school. The Malory girls were very fond of Bill and Clarissa, Towers and often visited them, either to go riding or just for chat. Miss a who was also a great horse-woman and close Peters, a friendof the pair, was a regular visitor too. 'Isay, do vou mind if along?' asked June. 'Poor ı tag basketful of mending to old Freddie's been given a do by it's going to take her simply ľm Matron and ages, so

So her hat and coat on, and soon the three June put girls were striding out of the gates of Malory Towers and along a country lane, carpeted with russet pretty autumn leaves.

loose end.'

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at

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wind is 'Mv word, this pretty blustery,' said Susan, head. 'Thank goodness we're not her hat on her holding cliff, or walking along the should have been blown we over.'

June stopped dead and lifted her Suddenly finger, 'Hush a minute! think I 1 heard something.' saying, other two fell silent, then they heard the The noise too little mew. This was followed by a woman's a plaintive dear, Sooty, 'Oh don't sav vou've voice, saving, got stuck that apple tree again! Now, how on earth am in to down?' get you

'It's coming from the garden of that little cottage over there,' said Felicity. 'I think that we should see if we can help.'

The was surrounded by wall, with a cottage a and gate in middle, the three girls let wooden the themselves in, an elderly lady standing the to see in middle of a neat little garden, looking up at an expression of apple tree with an dismay.

'Excuseme,' said Felicity. vou're ʻlt sounds as if some sort of trouble and we if in came to see we could help.'

how kind,' said the lady, her face creasing 'Oh, worried into a smile as she turned to face the three girls. 'Do what has happened? That silly cat of mine has vou see been climbing the apple tree, and now he's got himself stuck and Sooty doesn't can't get down. seem to that I'm used to be and can't go not as -1 as young after him any more!' climbing up

The pitiful mew sounded again, this time from above their heads, and the girls looked up to see a little pointed black face with brilliant green eyes staring down at them.

'Don't worry,' said June, stepping towards the tree. 'I'll have Sooty down in a trice.'

Quickly and agilely she began to climb, while Felicity stood at the bottom of the tree ready to take the cat from her. Susan, meanwhile, chatted to the old lady, whose name was Mrs Dale.

'Do be careful, dear!'Mrs Dale called out, as June climbed ever higher. 'I'd never forgive myself if you were to fall and hurt yourself.'

June had been climbing But trees since she could walk, and this one presented no problem to her. Soon she reached frightened Sooty was on, the branch the and she grabbed him into the front of him firmly, tucking her coat to keep him secure, before shinning back down again. Sooty about being handed wasn't pleased over to Felicity. too and dug his claws firmly into June's coat, but two girls the managed to dislodge him and Felicity placed him safelyon the ground.

'How can I ever thank you?' said Mrs Dale, stooping to stroke the little black cat.

'All in a day's work,' said June breezily. 'And now, I suppose, we'd best be on our way.'

'Oh no, you must come in and have some homemade cake and lemonade,' insisted Mrs Dale. 'It's the least Τ can do after vou've Sooty. Besides, Τ don't get rescued mγ many visitors and I should enjoy your company.'

So, within minutes, the girls were seated roundthe table in Mrs Dale'scosy kitchen, enjoying big slices of the most delicious fruit cake, washed down with lemonade.

'This cake is first rate, Mrs Dale,' said Susan.

'Well, it's nice to see you girls enjoying it,' said the old lady, smiling. 'I suppose you all come from Malory Towers?'

'That's right,' said Felicity.

'Well, you're a creditto the school. Actually, my granddaughter goes there.I wonder if you know her? Her name is Amy Ryder-Cochrane.'

The three girls almost choked on their lemonade, for never have imagined that Mrs Dale was they would related snobbish Amy. Mrs Dale was just a to the nice, ordinary lady, very like their own grandmothers, old and there was grand about her at all, while the nothing little cottage she indeed. lived in was very modest The girls exchanged said, 'Yes, we know Amy. She's startled glances and Felicity the same form as us.' in

'But she never mentioned that she had a grandmother living nearby,' said June.

'Ah well, she wouldn't,' said Mrs Dale. 'Because she doesn't know I'm here.'

The lady became pensive, looking the girls at deciding whether though or not she could trust them. as she decided Eventually, it seemed, that she could,for she went on. 'You see, my dears, Amy'sfather is very a well-connected gentleman. And when he wealthy, married mγ daughter, he didn'twant all his fancy friends and relatives knowing that she came from quite a common background, me.' SO she wasn't allowed to see very much of

The girls listened, appalled, and Felicity murmured to Susan, 'Now we can see where Amy gets her snobbishness from.'

'And when Amy was born, he didn'twant her having either,' 'My anything to do with me said Mrs Dale. daughter brought her to see when she was a me baby, but 1 haven't seen her since. Jane – that's my daughter visits now and again, but she never brings that husband hers wouldn't approve.' Amy because of

The girls didn'tknow quite what to say. Mrs Dale sounded quite matter-of-fact about the whole situation, but there was a hint of sadness in the faded blue eyes. It was left to outspoken June to say what they were all thinking. 'But that's absolutely dreadful!' she burst out. 'Don't Mrs worry, Dale, we'll tell here and bring her Amy that you're visit you.'

'Oh dear, you mustn't!' no, said the old ladv. my looking quite alarmed. 'You see, whatever my feelings are, it wouldn't be right to disobey encourage her to her father. 1 admitthat when I learned she was coming to school here, I hoped that I might get a now and then, for have of glimpse of her all 1 her that was taken when she aboutfive years old. is a photo was of But it would be very wrong me to ask her to go behind her father's back, so 1 must ask all vou confidence.' not to betray my

Rather reluctantly, the three girls promised Mrs Dale that they wouldn't divulge to Amy that she was living near the lady seemed and the old school, happy with this. were far from happy, girls, though, and they

The girls, though, were far from happy, and they discussed the matter as they went on their way to the riding stables.

'Amy's father must be a dreadful man,' said Susan, giving a shudder.

'Well, her mother must be awful too, for pretty turn her back on her own mother!' agreeing to said June. 'My goodness, if father tell my tried to Mother that she couldn't take me to visit my granny she would soon tell him where to get off!'

mine,' would 'Yes. SO said Felicity. She gave a sigh. 'It's such a pity that we can't let on to Amy. Mrs Dale seems such a nice woman, and she's awfully lonely. 1 daresay a few visits from Amy would cheer end.' her up no

'Yes,' said June, looking thoughtful. 'Yes, I expect they would.'

Felicity, who mistrusted June when she wore that thoughtful expression, said sharply, 'Now listen, June! I don't know what's in your mind, but we gave our word to Mrs Dale that we wouldn't say anything to Amy, and we must keep it.'

'My dear Felicity, I have no intention of saying anything to Amy,' said June.

'Good,' said Felicity. 'And we'd better not mention it to any of the others, either. We'll just keep it a secretbetween the three of us.'



Secrets and tricks

But June did tell someone else about Amy's grandmother – she told Freddie.

'You must promise not to word to any of say a 'And don't though,' the others, June warned her solemnly. that I've told you, or let on Felicity won't be very pleased.'

'Ishan't say a word, June,' said Freddie, who had listened open-mouthed to June's tale. 'You can count on me. It's quite a sad story, isn't it? Poor Mrs Dale!'

'She's such a dear old lady,' said June, with a sigh. 'And I felt so sorry for her, for she seems awfully lonely.

I did think of an idea to help her, but...'

June's voice tailed off and Freddie prompted eagerly, 'But what? Do tell, June.'

again and said, 'There's sighed no June point, for it wouldn't needssomeone really bold and daring to work. It carry off, and I just can't think of anyone who could do it it.'

Freddie laughed. 'But there's no one bolder or more daring than you, June! Why can't *you* carry out this mysterious idea yourself?'

'Because Mrs Dale has already met me,' answered June. 'Besides, my colouring is too different from Amy's.' Freddie's brow wrinkled in puzzlement. 'But what does your

colouring have to do with anything?

June, you simply must tell me what you have in mind, or I shall die of curiosity.'

ʻAll right then,' said June. 'You see, Freddie, we can't break our word and tell Amy abouther grandmother. So thought 1 would be rather a splendid idea if we it could get someone else to pretend to be and visit the old lady now and again, to cheer Amy, and go her up.'

Freddie gave a low whistle. 'We'dnever get away with it! Mrs Dale would know at once that the impostor wasn't Amy.'

wouldn't,' said June. 'She hasn't 'No, she seen Amy since baby, and the only photograph she has of her she was a is one that was taken when she was five. All we would do choose fair — like you, or need to is someone Nora.'

Freddie digested this for a moment, then said, would she foundout.' 'Felicity go mad if rather mocking little laugh. 'Oh, Felicity June gave a times. dreadfully pi Not that there's any can be at should find out.' She pretended to why she think reason then went on, 'I for moment, wonder if Nora could persuaded? It letting be means someone else in on that can't be helped. She might be a little the secret, but she's good-hearted scatterbrained, but and I think she want to help Mrs Dale. Nora's good actress, a daring, too – Τ don't think that she and pretty would be frightened of upsetting Felicity!' scornful, June's tone was slightly and Freddie was the other girl no She looked up to end, and stung. badly wanted her. Lifting chin, she said, to impress her 'There's need to involve Nora, June. I'll do it!' 'Are no you sure?'askedJune, looking hard at her friend.

'Absolutely positive,' answered Freddie firmly. 'Look, there's half an hour until bedtime – let's slip away to the little musicroom near the dormy. No one ever uses it,

so we shall be able to make some plans without being interrupted.'

So girls made their plans, and, by following the the Saturday afternoon, they were ready to them into put action. Freddie was full of bravado as she and June made their way along the lane to Mrs Dale's, keeping stream up a of light-hearted chatter. Inwardly, though, she felt extremely nervous and was even beginning to wish that she had never allowed June to talk her into this. But June -Freddie's nerves – kept going on well aware of about how the old lady would and how no happy be, one else Freddie would be but able to pull this off successfully, with such admiration that it and looked at her was impossible to back out. Within moments, it seemed to Mrs Dale'sdoor. The Freddie. they were knocking on old opened it, giving a little start of surprise as she saw June. 'Whv.it's who rescued cat!' she said. 'How nice the girl my again, dear. And you've brought friend! to see you а both of Do come in. vou.'

She ushered two girls into the the kitchen, and June took Freddie who was doing her utmost to remain in the background the arm, pulling her forward. Ί by have a surprise for vou, Mrs Dale,' she said, launching into rehearsed. 'I the little speech that she had know that you didn'twant me and the others to tell Amy that you were here, and we kept our word. But I'm afraid that the three of us discussed the matter in the common-room later. and unknown Amy was outside, and she overheard to us us.'

Mrs Dale put her hand up to her mouth, an expression of dismay on her face. 'So she knows that I'm here?' she said. 'My Amy knows?'

Now it was Freddie's turn to speak, but her vocal chords seemed to have become paralysed. Unseen by Mrs

Dale, June prodded her sharply in the back and, rather hoarsely, Freddie said, 'Yes, Gran. I know.

And I insisted that June brought me to meet you.'

'Amy?' said Mrs Dale, her pale blue eyes opening wide. 'Amy, is it really you?'

Freddie nodded and June, smiling to herself in quiet satisfaction, said softly, 'I'm sure that the two of you must have a lot talk 1'11 to about, SO go and leave vou to it. Amy, I'll see you back at school in time Don't be late!' for tea.

Mrs Dale, still looking hard at Freddie, didn't seem to hear June, but Freddie did and stared at her in horror. This wasn't part of the plan! June had promised that she stay and that she, Freddie, would not be would left alone with Mrs Dale.

'June, wait!' she cried. But it was too late – June was out of the door, and Mrs Dale was telling Freddie already to herself down and she would make them both a sit nice cup of tea. Freddie had choice but to do no as she was told, though inwardly she was seething. Just wait with June later! until she caught up

June, for her part, was extremely pleased with herself jauntily made her and whistled as she way back the Everything had gone just Of school. as she had hoped! Freddie would be simply furious with her, course. but June excelled herself out of trouble at talking and she would soon smooth thingsover.

But when the two girls met up outside the diningroom just before tea, Freddie seemed to have got over ill fact, much to her temper. In her own surprise, absolutely splendid time at Mrs Dale's! Freddie had had an had grandmother of her own, for both of hers had no died when she was little, and she had often felt envious of other girls when they talked about their own devoted and how they spoiled them. So spending time with grandmothers, Mrs Dale had been a novel experience for the girl, and a

got over her one. Once Freddie had very enjoyable nerves little, the of them had got along like two a house on Freddie fire. Of hadn't been able to course, relax completely, for she had to she guard her tongue SO that didn'tgive the game away. Even so, had been delighted she when Mrs Dale invited her to tea the following day.

'Iknow it's like,' the not what your father would old lady had said. 'I didn't set out make you go against his it's done now. We've wishes. but met and there's do about it. the nothing he can ΑII same, though, don't think you should mention it to him just yet. for your mother, that matter.'

Freddie related all of this to June in low voice as they had their tea, and June listened intently, pleased when the girl said that she was going to Mrs Dale'sagain tomorrow. The more the two saw of one another, the concerned. Ah, better. as far as June was Freddie might enjoying herself it wouldn't be long before be now, but her conscience began to prick her.

Meanwhile, June had plan of her own to carry out a that Freddie did plav a one not part in. Ever since Freddie had tricked Mam'zelle with the magicsoap, June had think up trick of her own _ and this been trying to а time she was determined that the glory would be hers and And now she had come up hers alone. with something effort in the whichwould Freddie's shade. put The Mam'zelle unsuspecting victim, vet again, was to be poor, June smiled Dupont, of course, and to herself as her trick would she pictured the reaction that

Αt back of third form's the the classroom, right door into a behind June's seat, was а small storage room. The room was home to old books, long-lost property and all kinds of odds and ends that nobody really wanted, locked. and it was kept permanently But June had discovered that the key hung on nail in the handyman's little a

cubbyhole and, her ingenious brain getting to work, she had come up with a first-rate plan for baffling Mam'zelle.

That the third formers evening, as prepared for Amy picked pot of from her cabinet and up a cream lid. removed The girl was extremely vain abouther the complexion and possessed a marvellous array of lotions She was forever smearing something or potions. other on her face and the others often teased her to about it.

'What do all these creams actually *do*, Amy?' asked Felicity, watching her in fascination.

'This one is a vanishing cream,' answered Amy, peering into the mirror.

'Well, it doesn't work,' called out June. 'We can still see you!'

June,' said Amy. 'Actually, 'Oh. very funny, it's supposed make spots and blemishes vanish. And now ľve just used to last of ľ ask the it, SO have to Mummy to send some more.' me

pot into the She threwthe empty wastepaper basket, and June gazedat it thoughtfully for a moment. Then she went and retrieved from the it basket. asking. all 1 have this?' 'Amy, is it right if ʻlf you really want an pot,' answered Amy, empty surprised. 'Though looking can't imagine what use you

'Oh, I have a use for it all right,' said June, grinning. 'Just you wait and see!'

have for

it.'

June decided trick on to play her Monday morning, and took the others into her confidence the night before, when they were all gathered in the common-room. The third listened raptly as formers June explained what she intended their faces. their eyes lighting to do, up and broadgrins on Even Veronica was looking forward to it, for she was French, scholar. particularly when it came to and no always felt in lowspiritson Monday mornings, with the

over and whole week of lessons weekend a her. Strangely enough, the only person who didn'tseem thrilled idea was Freddie, who was unusually quiet at the and pre-occupied.

'Anything wrong, old girl?' Felicity asked in concern, noticing that the girl didn't seem her usual self.

'Mm? Oh, no, everything's fine, Felicity,' answered Freddie rather distractedly. 'I'm just a little tired, that's all.'

'Of course, you were out in the fresh air all afternoon, weren't you?' said Susan. 'Where did you get to?'

quickly shot Freddie June a warning glance, but was quite unnecessary. She had no intention of saying it anything that might alert the others to the fact that she Mrs Dale's. been to Instead she replied vaguely, long walk along the just took a coast road and the sea really made me feel sleepy.' Felicity looked at air her and frowned. Freddie didn'tlook tired she closely looked if she was worried aboutsomething. June was as watching friendtoo – but she knew exactly what was her bothering her! Freddie had hardly touched thing at a teatime. Of course. that could have been because she already eaten at Mrs Dale'searlier, but it didn't explain her rather subdued air. June had managed to snatch minutes alone with Freddie before few prep and the girl tone, 'June, I really didn't think this said in a worried agreed through properly when I to pretend to be of it? I can't Amy. How am I going to get out go pretending to be all the time I'm on her at Malory Towers.'

'It's easy enough,' said June with a careless shrug. 'Just keep it up for little while longer, then you can a Amy'sparents pretend that your parents or rather

are sending you to a different school, far away from here.'

'Isuppose I could do that,' sighed Freddie. 'But I feel so dreadful about deceiving her! She's such a dear old lady.'

'Yes, but you're deceiving her for the best of reasons,' said June persuasively. 'Mrs Dale was awfully lonely, and now she's not. She's happy because she's got your visits to look forward to. That's good, isn't it?'

Freddie but without much conviction, and June agreed, smiled herself. Poor Freddie had so much on her to mind that she was in no mood for jokes and tricks. Everything was working out iust she had hoped! as

The third formers had a lot to look forward to, for as well as June's trick, the following weekend was half-term.

'Are your parents coming, Bonnie?' asked Amy.

'Oh, yes,' answered Bonnie, who was putting the finishing touches to a skirt she had made.

'Mummy's simply dying to see the school — and me, of course.'

As Amy watched Bonnie expertly finish a hem, her needle flying in and out, she said admiringly, 'How cleveryou are with your needle, Bonnie. I do wish that you would make something for me.'

Bonnie smiled angelically at the girl and said sweetly, 'I will. If you will do something for me in return.'

Amy, who was used to people agreeing to whatever she asked immediately, and was unaccustomed to bargaining, looked a little taken aback and asked, 'Whatis it you want me to do?'

Bonnie folded the skirt she had been working neatly, and laid it one side, before saying, to 'Well, as you're doubtaware, I'm not very good at no French. lt doesn't much matter when Mam'zelle Dupont roundher. But takes us, because I can easily get Mam'zelle Rougier – well, I haven't worked out how to make her like me vet.'

'Mam'zelle dislikes Rougier always the girls who likes,' said Amy. 'Veronica told You'll Mam'zelle Dupont me SO. like you.' *never* get her to

shall,' said Bonnie, 'Oh. with quiet certainty. can make adults like me. It's just that it takes always roundsome than others. And in longer to get the meantime, Mam'zelle Rougier being simply beastly is to me. She returned all that work I did prep the other night in pages and pages of it and expects me to redo it all and hand it to her at the end of the in it.' week.I can't do simply

'So, you want me to help you with your French, and you'll make me a dress, is that it?' said Amy.

Bonnie nodded. 'If you will do that for me, we can pop into town one lunchtime and choose a pattern and some material.'

As Amy foundFrench easy, she agreed this to readily and both girls were happy. Someone who was not with this arrangement, however, was Veronica. happy Ιt seemed that Amy and Bonnie were growing closer, while she, Veronica, was being pushed out. She would have to put her thinking on, and find cap and try а way of of Bonnie. And she getting rid had something else on With half-term her mind, too. almost upon them, Veronica come up with a needed plan to keep her to parents that she might spendthe day with Amy and away so her people. Veronica frowned. How could a term that had started promisingly have gone so wrong? SO



Vanishing cream

great deal of giggling and excited chatter There was a third formers the took their places in class the next as arrival of Mam'zelle morning and eagerly awaited the Dupont.

'My word, this is going to be super!' chuckled Pam. 'Isn't it just!' said Felicity, with a grin. 'June, have you got everything ready?'

In answer, June held up the empty vanishing-cream pot Amy had given her, and the key to the little storage room.She into the handyman'sroom earlier, while had sneaked out, and taken it from the nail wall. With he on the was would back there before luck. she have it he even noticed it was missing!

luck was But against June that morning. For the mistress who sweptinto the room was not plump little Mam'zelle Mam'zelle Rougier! Dupont, but The girls looked at one another in dismay, and murmurs of disappointment roundthe room.

'What a shame!' Susan whispered to June. 'You won't be able to play the trick now.'

stern face of Mam'zelle Rougier. June glanced at the She hated the idea of all careful her planning being vain. What was more.if she went ahead now, she would distinction of being the only girl the school have the in ever to have the nerve to play a trick on Mam'zelle Rougier, and that thought appealed to herenormously! She would probably be punished for it, but it would

be worthit. She winked at Susan and whispered back, 'Just watchme!'

The word went round, murmured from girl to girl. 'The trick is still on! June's going to play it on Mam'zelle Rougier!'

'You have to admire her nerve.'

'She's sure to be punished, but June won't care. I don't think she's afraid of anything!'

'June is the most daring girl in the school – even more daring than her cousin Alicia was. And her tricks are simply splendid!'

June overheard the whispered remarks and revelled in them. No other girl could hold a candle to her when it came to playing tricks — not even Freddie.

Mam'zelle Rougier also heardthe whispers though didn't catch what was being said fortunately she and her thin line lips tightened into a as she rapped sharply ruler, making everyone jump. on the desk with a

'Taisez-vous!' she commanded, in her rather harsh voice. 'Now, Mam'zelle Dupont has been awake all night with the toothache, and has gone to the dentist. So I shall be taking your French class this morning.'

sharp eyes sweptroundthe classroom. She looked and irritable, whichindeed she was, for her bedroom was next to Mam'zelle Dupont's and the other French mistress had kept her awake most of the night with her moans Mam'zelle Rougier put a hand across her mouth groans. yawn,then said, 'Bonnie!' 'Yes, Mam'zelle?'said to hide a Bonnie politely.

prep whichI 'Bring to the gave you back,' said me Mam'zelle Rougier. 'And let hope that you have us managed this time! The rest of get some of it correct page twenty-one in your French grammar booksand you, turn to s'il vous plait.' begin reading,

up her French Bonnie picked book, into which she had carefully copied Amy'swork, and stood up. She glanced June, who winked, roundbriefly then went up to the at mistress's desk and front of it, so that Mam'zelle stood in Rougier's view of the class was obscured.

Then June slipped from her seat and into the little storage room, which she had unlocked earlier.

At last Mam'zelle Rougier finished checking Bonnie's work, remarking grudgingly, 'A much better effort, Bonnie.

Please return to your seat.'

The little girl skipped back to her place and Mam'zelle Rougier got to her feet, saying, 'Now,let us

Then she stopped, frowning, and said sharply, 'Where is June?' 'I'm here, Mam'zelle Rougier,' came June's disembodied voice.

'Tiens!' cried the French mistress. 'June, are you hiding once!' underyour desk? I demand that you come out at 'l'm not *under* my desk, Mam'zelle,' said June from the room.'l'm *at* my desk. Can't you see me?' storage

Nora, who was very good at acting, raisedher hand and said in a scared voice, 'Mam'zelle Rougier,

June seems to have become invisible!'

The French mistress gave a snort of disbelief and snapped, 'Whatnonsense is this? June, I command you to show yourself.'

Mam'zelle, I'm here!'said June rather 'But plaintively. Most of the girls were struggling not to laugh by this time and, had the victimof the prank been Mam'zelle Dupont, have been in fits of they would giggles. But it was decidedly dangerous to laugh at the bad-temperedMam'zelle Rougier, who was growing angrier bν the second. SO they did their best to control themselves.

The mistress stalked back of French to the class, a frownon face, and passed her hand over June's her peering underthe chair, before bending over and desk. This was too much for who gave a choke Susan, of laughter, which she hastily turned into a cough. Then Mam'zelle spotted the empty pot of vanishing cream that June had left on her desk, and picked it up.

'Tiens! What is this?' she asked.

Freddie. who, in spite of her worries, was thoroughly enjoying the trick, said, 'It's June's vanishing cream, Mam'zelle say! What if she's used too Rougier. Oh. 1 much and vanished good!' for

'Vanishing cream? Pah, what nonsense!' said the French mistress. All the same, she did look rather alarmed when she took the lid from the pot and saw that it was empty.

'She's used it all!' said Nora, sounding horrified.

'Mam'zelle Rougier, what are we to do?' 'Yes, what if she doesn't come back and stays invisible forever?' put in Pam.

have girls vanishing ʻlwill not into thin air in mγ cried Mam'zelle Rougier. Several of the listening funnythat they had to girls foundthis so stuff hand-kerchiefs into their mouths stifle their laughter. to

'Ishall go inform Miss Grayling and at once that June said Mam'zelle Rougier, turning sharply has disappeared,' and door. As soon as walking towards the her back was June quietly from her hiding-place turned, sneaked and back into her seat.

'Mam'zelle Rougier!' cried Felicity. 'She's back! June is visible again! There's no need for you to go to Miss Grayling.'

The French looked roundand mistress gave a start she saw the wicked June, sitting as at her desk as large as life.

'June!' she cried. 'How dare you leave the classroom in the middle of a lesson.'

'But Mam'zelle, I didn'tleave,' protested June. 'I was here all the time.'

'That's true, Mam'zelle,' said Julie. 'We all heardher voice.' not wish to 'Yes. but I do hear *your* voice, ma chère Julie!' said Mam'zelle Rougier, who was working herself fine rage. 'June, I into а am not SO easy to Mam'zelle Dupont! fool as know that a trick has |

been played, and when I find out how you have made yourself vanish and then reappear I shall punish you!'

With that, Mam'zelle Rougier stalked back to the blackboard, her heels click-clacking on the floor. And June, as fast as lightning, darted from her seat and back into the room.Mam'zelle Rougier turned class, and storage face the to her handsto her cheeks. 'Mon gave a shriek, pressing again!' Dieu! The troublesome girl has vanished

'Sorry, Mam'zelle.' Once more June's voice could be heard from thin air. 'But I really can't help it.'

girls were quite helpless Well, the with laughter this time, and past caringaboutany punishment that Mam'zelle might dish out. This was such an Rougier excellent trick well worthit! Tears that it would be rolled down Felicity's while Susanwas doubled cheeks. up. Even Veronica was laughing uproariously!

'Silence!' Mam'zelle Rougier, shouted stamping her of foot so hard that a hair came down from strand bun she the back of her head. 'I will the wore at tolerate not this behaviour, *méchantes filles!* You will all write me fifty lines tonight!'

This sobered the third formers а little and their laughter died away. But just then the door of the classroom opened, and Mam'zelle Dupont appeared in the doorway. The relief of aching having her tooth removed had put the little French mistress in excellent mood. an and roundat she beamed the girls.

'Bonjour, mes petites! Bonjour, Mam'zelle Rougier! 1 must thank you for taking my class while I was away, for ı know that you, too, had a restless night and must be tired. tooth, how it ached! But now it all Ah, my is gone.'

'That is all that is gone, Mam'zelle Dupont!' not said 'You will step Mam'zelle Rougier dramatically. outside with have a tell.' me, please, tale to for 1 strange As the two French mistresses had left the soon as room,June emerged from the little room once more, this time door behind locking the her and slipping the key into her pocket.

'My word, June, that was a super trick!' exclaimed Nora, as June sat down behind her desk. 'But Mam'zelle Rougier is simply furious!'

'Yes, I'm afraid that you're going to get into awful trouble, June,' said Felicity.

not,' said June, grinning wickedly. 'An idea came 'No, ľm heard Mam'zelle Dupont say that Mam'zelle to me when I Rougier had suffered a restless night. I think I can all off doing lines as well. Freddie, get take that us empty pot and throwit out of the window into the this is what we're going to bushes. Now, listen, everyone _ do...'

Moments later, the two French mistresses returned, and Mam'zelle Rougier was most astonished to seeJune, looking the picture of goodness, with her head bent over her book.

'Ah! See, Mam'zelle Dupont!' she cried, clutching at the other French mistress's arm with one hand, and pointing at June with the other.

June, sitting desk and 'Yes, 1 see at her working hard at her French,' said Mam'zelle Dupont, eyeing Mam'zelle Rougier with concern. The tale that she had related had been quite astonishing, and Mam'zelle

Dupont was rather worried abouther countrywoman's state of mind. Girls did not vanish and re-appear at random — it was quite impossible!

The other third formers appeared to be concentrating hard on their work too, the dear, good girls, and surely this would not be so if something was amiss with one of their friends.

'June, you have come back!'cried Mam'zelle Rougier.

'Come back?' repeated June, with a puzzled frown.

'But, Mam'zelle, I haven't been away.'

but yes, you vanished!' said Mam'zelle Rougier. 'Ah. 'You you disappeared. The put the vanishing cream and other on girls, they saw you turn invisible is it not SO, girls?'

The third formers looked at one another in bewilderment and Felicity said, 'Mam'zelle Rougier,

June has been here all the time.'

'Vanishing cream?' said Julie with a puzzled frown.

'Whatvanishing cream, Mam'zelle?'

bad girls, all 'Ah, you are of you!' cried Mam'zelle desk. 'You are all Rougier, marching over to June's trying trick me. June, where the vanishing cream? is Open once.' your desk at

June obeyed, but there was nothing to be seen in the desk but books, pens and pencils.

'You have hidden it in your satchel, then!'said Mam'zelle Rougier, quite beside herself. 'I demand to search it!'

So June handed over her satchel but, of course, vanishing cream in there either. Poor the pot of was not Mam'zelle Rougier did not know what to think! Were the girls playing an elaborate joke on her, or was she going quite mad?

At last June said kindly, 'I think I know what has happened. You must have been dreaming, Mam'zelle.'

'June, please do not speak rubbish me!' said the to French mistress scornfully. 'How is it possible for me to wide awake?' when I am dream

Once more the girls looked at one another and Felicity said solemnly, 'You fell asleep vour desk, at Mam'zelle Rougier. lt was right after Bonnie brought her book to vou.'

'Never have I fallen asleep in a class!' said Mam'zelle Rougier, looking mortified.

'But you did, Mam'zelle,' said Susan. 'We wouldn't have said anything aboutit if you hadn't started talking about June vanishing.'

'Ah, this fault!'cried Mam'zelle Dupont. is my 'For it who kept you awake last night, Mam'zelle Rougier. was I lt is wonder that you fall asleep at your desk! no Now, you must go back to bed for the rest of the your sleep.I shall take your next morning, and catch up on well.' will class and all be

So Mam'zelle Rougier, now convinced that the whole episode had been a strange dream, went quietly from the room.

'And the best of it is that she thinksthe lines she gave us were part of the dream too!' laughed Nora. 'Well done, June.'

'Yes, trick,' said Freddie, that was a splendid taking quite took me out of June's arm. 'It myself for while.And no one else could have carried it off like vou, June. I take my hat off to you!'

word spread around the Somehow. school that June had successfully tricked Mam'zelle Rougier. Even the sixth form and Amanda Chartelow came up got to hear aboutit, to her face. 'Don't June with a broadgrin on forget afternoon,' she said. 'We practice you've got lacrosse this don't want you doing one of your vanishing acts!'

Bonnie also took advantage of June's trick to get the right side of Mam'zelle Rougier. She picked a huge bunch of late-blooming flowers from the garden and took them to the French mistress later that day.

'Oh. Mam'zelle Rougier, I've been so worried about vou!' she said in her soft voice.'I often used to have trouble was ill, sleeping when I and I know how tired it next day.' makes vou the

Surprised and rather touched, Mam'zelle Rougier took the flowers from Bonnie, saying, 'Thank you, ma chère. This is indeed most kind of you.'

Bonnie smiled her most charming smile at the mistress and went on her way. And from that day on, Mam'zelle Rougier remembered the girl's thoughtfulness and was much kinder to her in class.

only Miss Peters 'So there's who you haven't managed to charm,' said Nora in the common-room one evening. 'And she's a really tough nut crack. You'll never to with her, Bonnie.' 'I bet you a stick of toffeel succeed will.' said Bonnie at once.

'You're on!' said Nora. 'If you haven't managed to wrap Miss Peters roundyour little finger by the end of term that's a stick of toffeeyou owe me!'



Half-term

Half-term arrived at last, and there was great excitement throughout the school. Even sleepyheads like Nora and Amy of early, looking leaped out bed forward the to day with eager anticipation. Felicity was simply dying to see her mother and father, while Bonnie couldn't wait to be spoiled her doting more.And Amy was by parents once forward showing off looking to her good-looking Only Veronica father and beautiful mother to theothers. looked forward to the day with mixed feelings. for she had been try she might, quite unable to think of off halfa way to put her parents coming for wasn't that she didn't love her mother term. It and did. But she didn'tfeel that they were quite father, for she good enough certainly for and they weren't her _ good enough meet Amy'speople! to

As it turned out, fate took a hand and, just as the first parents were arriving, Veronica was called to Miss Grayling's office.

'Veronica. ľm afraid I have some disappointing news for Head, after she had greeted the girl. 'Your father you,' said the telephoned me earlier, and I'm afraid that he and vour won't be able to You mother come today. see, your and, although mother flu they were hoping has that she feel well enough to travel still would today, she is quite ill.'

'Isee,' said Veronica, beginning to feel a little guilty. She had wanted something to happen to stop her

hadn't wished parents coming, but she certainly for will be ill! 'Mother be all right, won't her mother to she?' she asked the little anxiously. Head a

'Of dear,' said Miss Grayling my kindly. course, 'She just needsplenty of rest at the moment, and I right as few daresay she will rain in be a as days. Now off and join the others and try you go can.' enjoy half-term best you to as

Reassured that her mother wasn't seriously ill, Veronica made up mind to just that! Amy was sure her do along with her to invite her people, and Veronica to go would be pains to impress them. Perhaps at thev might even invite her to stay with them during the holidays! Bonnie was for disappointment too, for in a she parents' received that her had а message to say car broken down, and they had to wait for it to be they wouldn't Malory **Towers** until fixed, so arrive at tomorrow.

'Well, at least you'll have *one* day with them,' said Felicity, seeing the girl's unhappy face. 'That's better than nothing. Cheerup, Bonnie!'

her,' Felicity 'Ido feel sorry for confided to Susan, girl walked away. 'But at the the same time, I hope as Mother doesn't ask her to ioin Does that sound us. awfully selfish?'

'Of course not,' said Susanloyally. 'It's quite understandable that you want to have your parents to yourself at half-term. I know that I wouldn't want to share mine with Bonnie!'

'Isay!' called out Pam, who was stationed at the dormitory window. 'There are some more cars coming up the drive. My word, just look at that Rolls Royce!'

'Why, that must belong to my people!' cried Amy, almost knocking Julie over in her eagerness to get to the window. 'Yes, it's them!! must go down and greet them.'

'Felicity, I think your parents are here too,' said Pam.
'And mine are right behind them – whoopee!

Come on, let's go down.'

were thronged with laughing, Soon the grounds chattering girls and their families. As she chatted happily with her saw Julie, with her Felicity mother and older parents, both of them red-haired and freckled, like brother, Julie Then she Pam, walking herself. spotted arm-in-arm with her June, sharing joke with one of and her parents, a And over there, talking Mam'zelle Rougier, brothers. to was Amy, with her mother. Felicity couldn't help glancing Mrs Ryder-Cochrane curiously. She was every bit as lovelyas she appeared in her photograph, but the cat-like green eves look, and Felicity decided gave her rather sly that she a didn'tlike her very much. Susan's big, jovial father was standing nearby, and Felicity saw, with a shock, that the was having conversation with was Mr man he а Ryder-Cochrane. And Amy's father didn't fit with the imagethat had built up mind at all! Felicity in her He was a most distinguished man, he looked and at the moment very relaxed and carefree, and laughing heartily was something that Susan's father had said. Nothing could have been further from the cold, snobbish man that Felicity had been imagining. Amy'sfather must be a very good actor indeed! Just then Mr Ryder-Cochrane caught her looking at him and Felicity, thinking suddenly Mrs Dale, and grinned. But of of how lonelyand unhappy she was because of this man, tight, polite little smile in could only manage a return, she before turned away.

Freddie, too, had noticed Amy'sparents, but she could barely bring herself to look at them.for she felt lf intensely angry with the couple. it wasn't for Mr Ryder-Cochrane's stupid, attitude stuck-up and Mrs Rvder-Cochrane's weakness in not standing up to her husband, she wouldn't uncomfortable situation she be in the was in now!

Mrs Dale'srequest, Freddie had visited Αt her vesterday afternoon, and had left feeling guiltier than ever. been highlyenjoyable to start with, and Freddie The visit had chatted about all kinds of and Mrs Dale had things. But then the old lady had begun recounting bits of family history, and had brought out some photographs of Amy'smother as a child, and Freddie had felt most uncomfortable almost _ as if she was stealing οf Now, she was delighted with her bit Amy'slife. to be and hugged them extra hard. She own loving, sensible parents, determined not guilt cast a let her shadow was to day, and to enjoy herself, but it was very difficult. the How she wished that she could confide in her mother and father about Mrs Dale, but that was impossible of They would course. be SO terribly disappointed in her!

went on, Bonnie and Veronica, As the day being the the third form whose only two in hadn't come. parents foundthemselves thrown together, which pleased neither of them!Big-hearted Mam'zelle Dupont, seeing them hovering the on the crowd, bore down on them and edge of said sympathetically, 'Ah, les pauvres petites! Do be while not sad out with their so-dear all the others are parents. We will have a splendid lunch in the school dining-room, and two of with me, *n'est-ce* pas?' the you will sit Veronica nodded politely and Bonnie smiled her

sweetsmile.but both of them were hoping be invited to out lunch.Bonnie had already dropped broadhints to to Felicity her parents, Mr and Mrs Rivers, obedient and but to silent message in Felicity's eyes, had steadfastly them.So both girls' hopes now centred Amy, who ignored on was coming towards them with her parents.

Amy introduced her parents to the two girls and, while Mrs Ryder-Cochrane greeted Bonnie, her husband turned to Veronica and attempted to make polite conversation. But

alas for Veronica, Amy's father seemed very grand that SO she quite tongue-tied, unable became to mutter 'yes' or 'no' in anything his auestions. but answer to however, was determined to with the Bonnie, make a hit couple, and she looked at Amy'smother with undisguised admiration, complimenting her on her expensive dress and groomed hair. Mrs Ryder-Cochrane, who had been perfectly looking little bored, thawed visibly and decided a that Bonnie was rather dear little thing. а

'Bonnie the girl I is wroteto you about, such beautiful clothes.' Mummy,' said Amy. 'The one who makes listened Veronica to this rather glumly. lt hadn't Amy'sletters seemed that she been mentioned in didn'tlike the all. she way that Mrs Ryderhome at And She Cochrane seemed to have taken to Bonnie. tapped the smaller the shoulder and said, 'It's almost girl on lunchtime, Bonnie. We'd better and get ready.' go

'Of make her smile course,' said Bonnie, managing to both brave and pathetic. 'Oh, *how* I wish that my mother take me and father were here to out to a restaurant. Still, I'm quite sure that the school lunch will be delicious. Come along, Veronica.'

As the two girls walked off towards the school, Mrs Ryder-Cochrane said in low voice to a Amv. 'Why don't you ask little Bonnie to come out with us, darling? She seems such a sweetgirl.'

can I?' said Amy, her eyes lighting 'Oh, Mummy, up. She always enjoyed basking in her beautiful reflected mother's glory, and had been thrilled by how Bonnie impressed with her had seemed. ΉΉ go and now.' tell her

'What about the other girl?' said Mr Ryder-Cochrane. 'It seems a bit mean to leave her behind. Amy, you had better invite her too.'

But Amy was already speeding off after Bonnie, and didn'thear what her father had said.

'Bonnie!' she cried, catching with the two girls. up says that you're 'Mummy come out lunch with us. to to You'd better let Miss Peters know.or she might think vou've gone missing, but do hurry up.'

Then she dashed back to her parents, while Bonnie went off of in search Miss Peters. Veronica was left alone. looking very forlorn, and Felicity, who was in sorry for her. 'Really,' earshot, felt she thought indignantly. 'Amy might have asked Veronica along too!'

Something about the slump of the girl's shoulders as she Felicity's turned away went straight to heart and she made impulsive decision. Without giving herself time to think an she regret it later, Felicity aboutwhether would ran over arm, saying, Veronica and grabbed her 'Veronica, go you're coming out with me ready – and get and people!'

thought For moment Veronica that she had a misheard Felicity, and she could only stand staring her at little shake and said, 'You do blankly. Felicity gave her a don't you? It's want to nothing grand, just a picnic come, lunch and a walk along the beach, but it's better than being here on vour own.'

foundher voice at Veronica last, stammeringout cut her thanks, Felicity short, saying, 'Never mind but and fetch your coat, while I that! Go run and let Miss happening. I'll meet you back know what's Peters here in five minutes!'

IfMr and Mrs Riverswere a little surprised find to that Felicity had invited strange girl to share a their picnic, they were far well-mannered too to betray it, and did their utmost to make Veronica feel welcome. As they were getting into the car, Amy, her parents and Bonnie drove past, the two girls looking most surprised to see Felicity and Veronica together.

'How odd!' remarked Amy. 'I always thought that Veronica couldn't bear Felicity.'

'And thought that Felicity couldn't bear Veronica,' said Bonnie, who felt quite jealous at seeing the two girls together. Why on earth had Felicity asked Veronica instead of her, Bonnie? The girl brooded on it during the the drive to restaurant. Perhaps she had been spending much time with Amy and neglecting Felicity. Although too idea for her to had been Felicity's make friends with Amv in the first place, so she oughtto understand.But Bonnie had. in her own way, become quite fond of Amy as friendship grew, and she certainly enjoyed her company. this, and had Maybe Felicity had sensed gone off with back at Bonnie. Yes, that was the Veronica get to explanation, for Felicity couldn't possibly *like* sensible Veronica! Bonnie made up her mind that she would more time to Felicity devote when they got back to and show her that their friendship was still important school, to her.

meanwhile, mercifully unaware Felicity, of Bonnie's intentions, was having а simply marvellous time. And SO. was Veronica. for wonder, The girl had been a little stiff and shy with Mr and Mrs Rivers at first, but they were that this very soon wore off. such a charming couple Rivers, took a particular liking to Mrs whose warm, put her very much in friendly manner mind of her own As walked along beachbeside mother. she the Mrs Felicity Rivers, watching and Mr Riverslooking for shells little way in front, a pang of conscience smote How *could* she have been so Veronica. stupid and wicked wish that wouldn't able to as to her parents be come today? Well, she had got her wish and now she had an

desire to mother, overwhelming see her and speak to too. She gave a her. Her father sigh and Mrs Rivers anything asked kindly. wrong, dear?' ʻls

'Iwas just thinking aboutmy parents,' said Veronica with a rather wobbly smile.'And hoping that my mother isn't feeling too poorly.'

'Poor child,'said Felicity's mother, taking her hand. Then her. 'Why don't you ask idea occurred to Miss Grayling an call if use her telephone to them tonight? vou can circumstances. sure that she wouldn't mind, under the vou'll sleep better tonight after you've had little chat а with your parents, knowing that your mother is being looked after.'

Veronica brightened at once and said, 'Oh, that would be simply marvellous. Do you really think the Head would let me?'

'Well, if you like, Veronica, I will come along to Miss Grayling's office with you when we get back to Malory Towers,' offered Mrs Rivers. 'I am quite sure that she won't refuse.'

'Thank you, Mrs Rivers,' said Veronica simply. 'You have been so kind to me today.' Veronica went up to Felicity in the dormitory that evening and thanked her too.

'It was jolly decent of you to invite me,' she said.
'I had a wonderful time — and I think you're very lucky to have such super parents.'

'Ithink I am too,' said Felicity with a smile.marvelling Mrs Rivershad stuck to the change in Veronica. her at word and asked Miss Grayling if the girl might telephone her The Head had agreed at once, of course. parents. and Veronica had felt much easierin mind after talking her father, and learning that her mother was feeling her little better. She had come into the common-room a

afterwards with a beaming smile on her face, and the third had looked formers at her surprise. in

side to ʻl've different Veronica todav.' seen a Felicity had said to Susan. 'She seemed much – oh, I don't know – much softer and more humble somehow.' nearby, had June, sitting given a scornful snort and said, 'Don't let her fool you, Felicity. You're too

softhearted for your own good!' you keep telling 'So me!' said Felicity, nettled. 'But think that only a *hard*-hearted could person have

failed to feel sorry for Veronica today. It must have been dreadful for her being alone, when most of us had our here.' people

'She's putting on an act to gain sympathy,' scoffed course, June. 'Of what she *really* wanted was *Amy*'s sympathy – fancy restaurant. But that and lunch in a didn't work, so had to fall back on she you, Felicity. Veronica will be back to her old self again before mark my words!' long, you

two of 'Perhaps the you should agree to disagree,' said the sensible, steady Susan, looking from Felicity's little face to June's mocking one. 'Come troubled on been a superday. Let's not spoil it with a it's silly argument.'

'Dear Susan!' said June with a laugh.'Always pouring oil on troubled waters. No, don't glare at me like that, Felicity, for I have no intention of arguing with you. As Susanhas so sensibly suggested, we'll agree to disagree.'

matter was left there, though Felicity And the felt little cross with June. The trouble was, she thought, sure of herself that she made those June was always SO less confident – like Felicity _ doubttheir own opinions! when Veronica So came over in the dormitory and thanked her, Felicity felt heartened.

next day, Sunday, saw Veronica Amy'sside But the at again.Bonnie's arrived take her out, so Amy parents to day with her graciously invited Veronica spendthe and to her parents.

Felicity, unaware of this invitation, sought out Veronica and said generously, 'You know, Veronica, you're most welcome to come with me and my people again today.' you, Felicity,' 'That's awfully kind of said Veronica, little awkward. blushing and looking a 'But, you see, Amy invited has already me to spendthe day with her and I've accepted.'

you, of said Felicity, 'Oh, well, that's up course,' to careless Inwardly, with a shrug. though, she wondered could have such little pride that she tagged how Veronica along girl had so callously abandoned her with Amy after the Still, it was none of her business really, and it would be nice to have her parents all to herself. All the same, she hoped that June wasn't going to be right about Veronica. She was far cocksure as it proved too was!



Trouble in the third form

'Everything seems SO flat after half-term,' complained Nora, as third formers break-time. 'I the stood in the courtyard one June, can't you need cheering up! play another trick?' vou've had two this 'No, term already,' answered June. 'I don't want to spoil you. Besides, if we play becoming commonplace too many tricks they just end up they should.' and people don't appreciate them as

'Spoilsport!' said Nora, pulling a face. 'How aboutyou then, Freddie? Can't you come up with something to give us all a laugh?'

But who seemed be world of Freddie, to in a her own, hadn't been listening the to conversation and didn't even realise that Nora was addressing her until June gave her nudge. а

'Sorry, Nora,' said Freddie, sounding distracted. 'Whatdid you say?'

Nora repeated Freddie shookher her request, but head and said ruefully, Ί don't seem to be able to come up with any jokes or tricks at the moment, ľm afraid.'

Felicity frowned this. Freddie's at sense of fun certainly have deserted lately.She said as seemed to her much to Susan, when the two of them were alone in the commonroom later.

jolly self,' Susanagreed. 'She doesn't seem like her old, 'Perhaps she's finding it a bit of a strain to keep with June, who can do brilliantly at and play up lessons the fool. But Freddie isn't quite as cleveras

June, and she needsto concentratemore in class to get good results.'

'Yes. probably right,'said Felicity, vou're her brow 'Darrell used to that Alicia was just clearing. say the same.Let's hope that's all it anyway.' is,

'Isaw you talking to Bonnie earlier,' said Susan, changing the subject. 'She seems to be hanging round you more and more since half-term.'

'Yes. had noticed.' said Felicity wearily. 'She keeps 1 trying to persuade me to make up a three with her and how often I refuse, Amy, and no matter she alwavs must say, for someone comes back. I dainty and SO she's awfully thick-skinned!' fragile-looking,

'Well, thank goodness we managed to get her to spend some time with Amy,' said Susan. 'Otherwise

I should *never* have you to myself.'

'Yes, that little scheme worked treat.' said а 'Though don't suppose Felicity. 1 Bonnie would be too pleased if she knew that I had only suggested she split Amy and Veronica up because we didn't want her time! And Veronica tagging along with us all the would furious too.' be simply

'Well, thank goodness neither of them will find out,' said Susan complacently.

But she was quite wrong. at that very moment, For Veronica standing the other side of the commonwas on hadn't room door! As usual, she meant to listen, and had only been on her way to the commonroom collect to something. But on hearing voices, the urge to listen in And now her feelings were very mixed. had been too much. hand, the knowledge that Bonnie On the one had only a favour Felicity would befriended Amy as to be verv also felt usefulindeed. But she hurt and angry that Felicity had set Bonnie to break up own friendship with work to her her feelings Felicity had softened Amy. Since half-term towards

great deal, but now the old of feelings bitterness and resentment came flooding back. Just who did Felicity Riversthink shock – she was? Well, she for was in a and SO was silly little Bonnie!

Bonnie grew quite exasperated with Veronica over the next of days. The girl kept giving her strange looks, and odd, couple triumphant little smiles that Bonnie was quite at loss understand. Veronica, typically, savouring was enjoying her new-found knowledge and keeping it herself. until the to right to break the moment was news to Amy. And the came after art lesson moment one afternoon.

Linnie. the art mistress, was very good-natured Miss and easy-going, and the girls were allowed to sit where pleased in her class. Amy took a seat by the window. and both Veronica moved towards and Bonnie the empty reached it seat beside her. Bonnie first and sat down, much to Veronica's annoyance.

'I always sit next to Amy!'she protested.

will 'Well, it be pleasant change for her a have me beside her instead,' said Bonnie softly, looking up at Veronica with the innocent stare that always infuriated her. 'Off Veronica.' you go,

But Veronica wasn't giving up without a fight, and she said through gritted teeth, 'I'm not going anywhere, you little beast. Move at once!'

who loved to have people fighting Amy, over her the quarrel, favours, took no part in but stared rather the window. smugly out of lt was left to Miss calmly but firmly, 'That will Linnieto intervene, saying do, girls! Veronica, there is seat over there next to a there.' Please go and sit

Veronica did not dare disobey the mistress, and reluctantly moved away to sit next to Julie, leaving Bonnie to enjoy her victory.

Linnie's classes Miss were always very free and easy, and the girls chattered away to one another as thev Veronica scowled worked. she watched Amy and as they talked and laughed. Bonnie, their headstogether as Well. Bonnie would be laughing on the other side of her face very soon!

After the art lesson finished, Veronica caught up with Amy and Bonnie outside.

'Ido so love Miss Linnie's classes, don't you?' said Bonnie sweetly. 'Amy and I just talked and talked throughout the whole lesson.'

'Really?' said Veronica, a smile on her face and a dangerous glint in her eyes. 'And did you talk about how you have only been sucking up to Amy because Felicity Riversput you up to it?'

Bonnie turned pale, while Amy gasped and said, 'Bonnie, is this true?'

true that Felicity 'lt it's asked me to try and make friends with you,' stammered Bonnie. Then she threw a spiteful look at Veronica and went on, 'She wanted me and get you away from dear trv Veronica's unpleasant influence. But I did genuinely like you from the first, Amy, and now that I know you better I like vou even more. Please say that we can still be friends!' Amy was quivering with indignation. She was used to people vying for her friendship, and to hear that Bonnie had only palled with her because Felicity had up to put her up it, was very hard for her to bear. stick with Veronica,' she said, her tone icy. Ί think I'll

least I know that *she* is a true friend.

Come along, Veronica.'

said Veronica. 'Bonnie, there's 'Just а moment,' something I need to tell you. You see, the main reason asked you to that Felicity befriend Amy was that she you following and Susanwere sick to death of them round

all the time and making a nuisance of yourself. Quite honestly, I can't say that I blame them.'

Stricken back at Veronica, and longing to get 'And just how did Bonnie snapped, you find all this out, Veronica? Through people and listening spying on at expect.' Veronica's guilty look told Bonnie at doors, 1 once that she had hit head, and the nail on the she said scornfully, Ή thought much. You're as despicable, Veronica!'

'Well I, for one, am extremely glad that Veronica did find all this out,' said Amy haughtily.

'Otherwise I should never have foundout what a deceitful little creature you are, Bonnie.'

And with that, she took Veronica's arm and the two girls walked away, leaving Bonnie alone with her thoughts. Alas, they were not happy ones. She had lost Amy'sfriendship, and now it seemed that Felicity didn't want her either. Poor little sob. Was that what Felicity Bonnie gave a really of her – that she was nothing thought but nuisance? a the And did she honestly prefer company of that dull, Susan? boring Well, there was only one way to find out for sure – and

tackle Felicity.

that was to

The third-form common-room was very crowded and noisy Nora had put a gramophone record that evening. on, and she and Pam were doing an idiotic danceto the music, the others fits of laughter. As the keeping in music said, 'Felicity! Bonnie raisedher voice and 1 stopped, need to speak to you. Is it true that you only encouraged me to be Amy'sfriendbecause vou leave you alone?' wanted me to

Felicity bit her lip, seeing the hurt and anger in the other girl's eyes. But was no beating around the bush. it use The time had come to straight with Bonnie. be

said. 'It's true. I'm 'Yes.' she sorry if you're Bonnie, did let you down gently. but 1 try to You iust wouldn't take the hint.'

The of the third form had gone quiet now, all rest of them listening intently Felicity went on, 'Susan is as my best friend, and you knew that from the start. And she always will be. No one can take her place with me.' Then, if that Bonnie looked as she was aboutto seeing burst into tears, she added more gently, 'You and have 1 Bonnie, very little in common, whereas you and Amy are interested in right that the the same things. lt's two of vou should be friends.'

'Excuseme, Felicity!' said Amy angrily, jumping her to feet. 'I prefer to choose my own friends, if you don't mind. And I most certainly do not want to be friends with a girl who has only been nice to me as a you!' favour to

And Amy flounced out of the room, slamming the door behind her.

Susan, who had been listening all this with a to of said, 'Felicity and I to find frown, never meant vou out about this. Bonnie, and I'm sorry that you and Amy have fallen out of it.' 'How did find out?' because you who had been puzzling asked Felicity, over this.

told me,' answered Bonnie, 'Veronica with a malicious of direction 'I'll leave glare in the the culprit. you to work out for how she came by her information.' yourself

Felicity rounded Veronica at once, crying, 'So. on been snooping again, Veronica! did think, after I vou've 1 half-term, that you was nice to you at might have turned new leaf, but you're just bad as ever.' over a as

Several of the girls looked at Veronica in disgust and her cheeks burned – until she remembered something else that she had overheard.

'It's just as well I did,' she retorted. 'For I found out that you eggedBonnie on to try and spoil my

friendship with Amy. So don't dare act all high and mighty with me, Felicity Rivers!'

Then Veronica, out of the room and June, too, stormed who had been watching the dramatic scene avidly, laughed. 'Well done, Felicity!' she called out. 'That's two people you've managed drive out of theroom this evening.' to

'Oh, shut up, June!'snapped Felicity, who was in no mood for June's malicious sense of humour tonight.

June said no more, but grinned she lounged back as in her chair, waiting for the entertainment to continue. friend. Freddie looked hard at her saw how she was and suddenly all the drama, thoroughly enjoying realised little shockthat June thrived with a trouble. on And if life was going along too peacefully and smoothly, she would stir thingsup herself. For the first time a doubtcrept into Freddie's mind. Had June been actingkindly and of Mrs Dale'shappiness when she thinking suggested that she, Amy? Or she used Freddie Freddie, pose as had as outrageous prankthat she had known cat's-paw to play an would end in trouble? But there was no time to think about that now, for Bonnie had turned on Felicity again, her voice trembling as she cried, 'I satisfied, hope you're Felicity Rivers! You don't want to be mγ friend, and now – ľve thanks to you -Amy doesn't either. got nobody! at all!' Nobody

Then burst into noisy sobs and fled from the room, she causing crow, 'A hat-trick! Nice work, Felicity!' June to Seeing that the normally even-tempered Felicity ready to explode, Pam gave June a little shove and muttered, 'For heaven's sake, be quiet, June! Things quite tense are it is, without here tonight enough in as vou stirring thingsup.'

'Ishan't say another word, Pam,' said June, her eyes dancing mischievously. 'It looks as if our dear head-girl

has quite enough on her plate at the moment, without me adding to her woes.'

didn'tJune just relish the fact, thought Yes, and Freddie, through lowered eyelashes. If only could watching her she make the laughing, carefree girl feel the weight of her conscience, just as she, Freddie, felt hers lying heavyon her shoulders. But did June even *have* a conscience?Freddie didn't know,but she intended to find out. And if it turned out that June did have one, Freddie stir was going to it into life!

Felicity felt very down in the dumps the following afternoon, as she and Susangot changed ready for lacrosse practice.

'Imust be the only head-girl at Malory Towers ever to have been sent to Coventry by her own form,' she complained.

'What nonsense!' said Susan, laughing at her friend's gloomy expression. 'You haven't been sent to Coventry!'

'Well, Amy is barely speaking me, while Bonnie to and Veronica won't have anything to do with me at all.' 'And although I don't care for Felicity sighed. anv of can't altogether blame them. them very much, 1 really don't feel as if I've handled this very well.'

you've 'Don't feel as if handled what very well?'asked hear this. Pam, coming into the changing-room time to in Felicity told her, and finished by miserably, 'I saying don't think that I've been a great success as head-girl.Susan, vou would have been a much better choice. Or you, Pam. You were absolutely fine last year.'

but I was lucky,' said Pam, wrinkling 'Everything went really smoothly last brow thoughtfully. year, and didn'thave people like Veronica, or Bonnie, or Amy to deal with. So you see, Felicity, I wasn't really tested.' 'Well, I've been tested all right,'groaned Felicity. 'And been foundwanting.' ľve

'There's still time to put thingsright,' said Pam bracingly. 'The term isn't over yet.'

quite true,' said Susan. 'Everything will 'What Pam says is be sorted out in the end, Felicity, vou'll see. Now come on, let's go and blow some of those cobwebs field. You know, Felicity, the lacrosse Amanda was telling jolly good chance me that you stand a of getting team this year.' into the second

'Did she really?' said Felicity, cheering up at once. and let's see if we 'Susan, you must practise hard too can both get on the team. Wouldn't that be simply marvellous?'

June had also been looking forward to lacrosse practice, but Freddie had other ideas.

Ί you, Mrs Dale has invited told me to tea and said that I might bring a friend.' said Freddie. she 'And the you.' friendl'm bringing is

'But Amanda's expecting me turn up for lacrosse,' to grumbled June, who didn't want to have tea with Mrs Dale at all. She had purposely distanced herself from the old ladv and the situation she had created. But Freddie, seeing of June through new eyes, was now aware this and was determined that June wasn't going to keep her distance any longer.

she 'Amanda will understand,' said firmly. 'It's and the practice is optional, vou don't have Saturday, SO Besides, there's another one tomorrow afternoon to go. if really that keen.' vou're

June continued to protest, but for once Freddie was determined to have her way, and eventually the two set off And, by together to Mrs Dale's. the time they left, June's conscience was very much alive.

little guilty when Mrs Dale The girl started feel a to 'Amy's' friend, before welcomed her warmly, as sitting two girls down to sumptuous tea. the simply a

'Heavens, you must have been baking all morning!' exclaimed Freddie, her eyes staring at the table laden with homemade scones, cakes and apple pie.

'Well, it's nice having someone to cook for,' beamed the old lady. 'Now, tuck in, both of you.'

delicious the food was, June foundthat her But, as appetite had deserted her, and the food seemed to stick in her throat. This tea must have cost quite a lot and it that Mrs Dale wasn't very well money, was obvious off. With a sinking heart, June remembered telling Freddie blithely what a sweetold lady Mrs Dale was. But June hadn't realised the time how sweetand how kind at what had seemed like a she was. And prank now began to feel like very cruel deception. June also felt unnerved а obvious, and very genuine, affection between Freddie the and Mrs Dale, something that she hadn't bargained for. But worsewas to come. As the girls were thinking about off back to Malory setting Towers, Mrs suddenly exclaimed, 'Why, Amy, it's your birthday week а tomorrow, isn't it?'

Freddie, Was it? thought startled. Then she remembered hearing Amy mention something to Veronica about having birthday a coming up soon, and she nodded.

'Well, you must come over and I'll give you your present,' said Mrs Dale happily, as the two girls exchanged horrified glances.

'There's no need to give me present, Gran,' a said Freddie strangled tone. 'Please don't spend your in а me.' money on

'Well, what's the world coming to if I can't give my only granddaughter a present on her birthday!' tutted Mrs Dale. 'I've never heard the like!'

So the end of it was that Freddie had to promise to visit Mrs Dale on Amy'sbirthday, but she was

deeply unhappy about it. And June. She SO was was oddly silent on the walk back to Malory Towers, but sick. She had inwardly she felt meant keep Freddie to had would begin occupied, and foreseen that the girl to feel guilty about deceiving old lady. But she the who prided herself much on her careful planning SO hadn't would become fond foreseen that the two SO of one another, and she could have kicked herself. Not for the world would she willingly have hurt Mrs Dale or Freddie that matter. And the either. for dreadful thing was. June couldn't see way out of it without causing any both of of could she herself them a lot pain. Nor fool Freddie's into thinking that it problem and not hers. was was responsible for She this whole, terrible mess, and somehow she had think of make everything to a way to right.



A shock for Amy

June felt very sorry for Freddie now that she understood some of what she had been going through, and knew how sickening was to it have something preying on vour mind. It was really horrible, even when you were laughing for and jokingwith friends, was always the back of it there, at your mind, dark shadow. although casting But she was kinder a made her Freddie, June's worries very short-tempered indeed with everyone else.

She Amanda's Sunday went to lacrosse practice, hoping for a respite from her cares, but unfortunately it only made thingsworse. The girl marking her, Fay, from South agile and most determined little player, Tower, was an

hardly allowed June near the ball all. at Frustrated, June lost her temper and tackled poor Fav most aggressively, knocking her to the ground bringing Amanda's wrath and down on head. her

'June!' cried Amanda, storming on to the field. 'Off! No, don't argue with me! Go and get changed at once.'

June stomped off Angrily, to the changing-room, but the time she had got back into her uniform, her bv anger had deserted her and she felt deeply ashamed herself. Amanda glared at her when she appeared spectators, but was mollified the she when. at among end of the practice, June went up to Fayand apologised. the She also said sorry to Amanda, and the big girl accepted apology, saying, 'Very well, but you must learn to her can't possibly include control your temper, June, for 1 you in a team until you do!'

But the next morning June was in hot wateragain, after cheeking Miss Peters in the Geography class.

'How dare you speak to me like that!' snapped the rosy cheeks turning even redder, mistress, her as thev did when she 'And stand up when I always was angry. you.' address

Red-faced, June got sullenly to her feet and mumbled, 'I'm sorry, Miss Peters.'

'Ibeg your pardon, June?' said Miss Peters coldly, and June was forced apology to repeat her more Really, all do lately was clearly. she seemed to apologise to people!

'When 'Come and see me after class,'said the mistress. shall have decided suitable punishment ı on а for vou.' she wouldn't off And knowing Miss Peters. get June, sitting lightly, thought down again.

form, Felicity As head of the took the girl to task for her behaviour, and June bore it as patiently as could. wouldn't if she fell she Heavens, it do

out with Felicity well! She really must try as and concentrate on the problem that was causing irritation, her the of and not let her temper get better her.

Alas for such good intentions! June got in a rage again that very evening — this time with Amy.

Amy had been holding forth to a rapt Veronica in the common-room abouther forthcoming birthday, and the others were getting heartily sick of her.

'As it's on Sunday, Mummy and Daddy have a got the Head's permission to come and take me out,' said Amy. 'We're going to that very grand hotel overlooking the lunch, and they're beachfor sure to bring me a super present.'

exclaimed in admiration, and Amy went on, Veronica 'Mv aunt always sends me the most enormous cake, as well. share that at teatime. Did can all 1 ever tell vou we aboutthe Christmas party they threw for friends home my at last year? My word, it was magnificent! We had

But point June, who had been trying to at this extra work Miss Peters concentrateon the had set her as threwdown her book and leaped her feet. punishment, to 'Yes, Amy, you *did* tell Veronica about the marvellous partv Daddy threwfor you!' she cried. 'And about the Mummy and very expensive present they bought you, and aboutevery birthday you've ever had since you were five years old! And ١, for one, am sick and tired of hearing aboutit. You're nothing but a spoilt brat, Amy!'

back as though shrank Amy she had been slapped, while the others looked in shocked silence. on Amy had been annoying, but there was need for no June to vicious! be quite so

Felicity called her sharply to order and, had Amy not retaliated, the matter might have rested there.

But Amy, recovering from her shock, foundher voice and, looking down her long nose at June, she said, 'I suppose

you're just jealous, June, because your parents aren'tas wealthy as mine, and can't afford to throwsplendid parties for you, or give you expensive presents.'

Αt once June fired up again and, without thinking, retorted. ʻľd rather have my parents than yours any day, Amy! Do think I would want a father who is you my mother's family? ashamed of Or a mother who is too weak to stand up him? No, thank you!' to

As the words were out June regretted them soon as and wished that she it was too could take them back. But late. Felicity and Susanwere staring at her in horror. had turned Freddie pale, her handstightly gripping the arms chair. And Amy was looking completely bewildered, as of her were the rest of the girls.

Contrite now, June said hastily, 'I'm sorry, Amy. Please forget that I said that. Honestly, I get into such a rage sometimes that I don't know what I'm saying half of the time!'

'Ican't forget it,' said Amy, a queerlook on her face. 'And I think that you knew exactly what you were saying, June. What did you mean?'

unlikeJune to lost for lt be words, but she was help. And Felicity was now and she looked at Felicity for decided that it was no use tryingto hide the truth from She was absolutely furious with June for Amy any longer. that, but she would blurting it like deal with her out later! As possible, she told Amy how she, Susan concisely as and how they had grandmother, and June had met her tell Amy that she was living near the promised not to she didn't want to Mr school because go against Ryder-Cochrane's wishes.

Amy listened intently, an incredulous expression on had finished, face, and when Felicity she laughed and shookher head. 'You're mistaken, Felicity,' said. 'My grandmother she Australia shortly before my parents married. moved to

my father why, And as for disapproving of her – that's nonsense! He promised that we would and me go fact, we'vebeen on visit her one day. In the verge of going but Mummy has been taken ill, several times, always SO it hasn't happened yet. I don't know who this woman is, butshe certainly isn't my grandmother!'

The third formers didn'tknow what to think now, and exchanged puzzled looks. Then Pam, who had been looking very thoughtful, said, 'Amy, do you have a photograph of your grandmother?'

'Yes,' said Amy. 'It's one that she sent to Mummy from Australia.'

'Go and fetch it then,' said Pam. 'And hurry up!'

Amy rushed from the room, and was back a few moments later, clutching a photograph, which she handed to Felicity.

'It's Mrs Dale!' said Felicity. 'Amy, I tell you this is definitely the woman that Susan, June and I met. Isn't that so, Susan?'

Susan, who was peering over Felicity's shoulder at the photograph, nodded solemnly, and Nora said, 'The plot thickens. I say, Amy, I don't suppose your grandmother has a twin sister?'

'Of course she hasn't!' said Amy, her thoughts whirl. 'It doesn't make any sense. If Grandmother has from Australia, why hasn't she returned been in touch with me, or with Mummy? I don't understand what's going on!' 'Ithink I do,' said June, who had been looking pensive. 'But I don't think you will like what I haveto Amy.'

'Well, that doesn't usually bother you!' said Amy harshly. 'Just spit it out, June.'

'Very well,' said June, looking rather grave. 'You see,
Amy, it isn't your father who is ashamed of
Mrs Dale – it's your mother!'

Amy remained speechless, her mouth wide open, June As went on, 'Mrs Dale isn't at all wealthy or grand. that your mother was afraid to let your father meet her. she didn't want him to because know that she came from a plain, ordinary family. So she pretended that her mother lived in Australia, and then fooled you and your father thinking she was ill every time a trip to visit Mrs Dale was planned.'

'Idon't believe it,' said poor Amy, her face ashen. 'How could Mummy do that? And how could she lie to Daddy and to me for all this time?'

very sorry for Amy, and Felicity felt put Everyone girl's shoulder, saying hand on the kindly, 'All of this dreadful you, Amy. I must have come as shock to a think that you ought to sort thingsout with your parents when they come for your birthday.'

But Amy hardly seemed to hear what Felicity said, for there was one thought uppermost in her mind and she said firmly, 'I want to meet my grandmother.'

'Well, you can't go and meet her now!' said Susan, sounding alarmed. 'It's dark and it's almost bedtime.'

'Tomorrow, then,' said Amy determinedly. 'Felicity, you can come with me and show me where she lives.'

Suddenly, Freddie, who had remained silent and lost in thought throughout, stood up and said firmly, 'I'll come with you, Amy.'

Every head turned towards her in astonishment, you don't know Mrs Dale!' said, 'You, Freddie? But Felicity 'Ido.' said Freddie, looking extremely white and nervous. had a great shock tonight, 'Amy, I know you've but I'm afraid you haven't heard everything. You see, Mrs Dale thinksthat am vou.'

'This gets stranger and stranger by the second!' said Julie, scratching her head. 'Freddie, how can Mrs Dale possibly think that you are Amy?'

Stammering, her voice cracking, Freddie explained.

'Well!' exclaimed Pam, as Freddie reached the end of her tale and hung her head. 'This is certainly a night for revelations! Does anyone else have anything extraordinary they would like to own up to?'

No one did. of course, and Freddie went over to Amy, taking both of the girl's handsin hers and saying earnestly, 'Please let me come with you tomorrow, Amy, that I might explain thingsto Mrs Dale and didn't mean to hurt her, truly I apologise. I didn't. just felt dreadfully sorry for her, and thought cheer her up by visiting I could and pretending to should have thought you. I be it through more carefully. If

I had I wouldn't have been so stupid, and would have said no to the whole crazy idea!'

Amy, whose mind was reeling, said nothing, but the once. She had others believed Freddie at acted rashlv. and thoughtlessly, heart had been in foolishly but her the was different with June, though, right place. It who was now sitting alone in the corner, keeping unusually quiet and looking rather ashamed of herself. And well she Felicity, who felt might, thought quite disgusted with the idea had been June's. girl. The whole and Felicity knew that she hadn't acted from motives of kindness. No, work, and June's twisted sense of mischief had been at she cause trouble for Freddie. had certainly meant to Felicity wondered why, as she and Freddie were supposed friends. But then June had to be always had a odd sense of humour! rather

'Will you have to report this to Miss Grayling?' Freddie asked Felicity now, looking rather scared. June's heart sank as she heard this. It had never even occurred her that the Head might become involved, and June knew that Miss Grayling would not go easy on her. She might even expel her, and June felt sick at heart at the thought.

'That's for Amy to decide,' answered Felicity, looking across at the girl.

'Idon't know.' said Amy, on whose face the strain was beginning to show.'I iust can't think about that at the moment. Αll ı want is to grandmother and meet my get to know her. Freddie, you can come with me tomorrow. know that she And I can let her has been wrong about my father. and that he would like to meet her well.' as

'No!' cried Felicity and Freddie together.

'Amy, you can't,' said Felicity. 'Your grandmother be terribly hurt if knew how your mother would she And she's going to had behaved. have quite enough shocks deal with tomorrow as I'm afraid to it is. that your poor father villain of is going to have to remain the the time being.' piece for the

'Of course,' said Amy, running a hand over her brow. 'I'm not thinking very clearly.'

'Well, I'm sure it's no wonder,' said Pam, getting up the bell for bedtime sounded. 'You've had an awful as Now it's lot to take in tonight. time for bed, and you'll after a good night's feel much better sleep.'

following morning, Amy nor But the neither June if they had slept very well, both of looked as them pale and heavy-eyed.Amy had had far too much going on in mind to allow her sleep properly, while June knew that she to was going to be in disgrace with the rest of her form, and – even worse-perhaps with Miss Grayling as well. No one spoketo her she dressed and ate breakfast, as her even Freddie, and the silence was very hard to bear. not Felicity sought out after breakfast, led her and her to one of the little music-rooms.

you're going to tell me off.' 'Isuppose said June, chest, defiant folding her arms across her to the last, even though she knew that she richly deserved scolding. a

'Yes, I am,' said Felicity bluntly. 'June, what were you thinking of? How could you have been so stupid and so cruel?'

'I admitthat it was stupid,' said June. 'But I didn't intend to cause Mrs Dale any hurt.'

not,' said Felicity. 'But you certainly meant 'Perhaps Freddie. to cause trouble for Why, June, when she's your friendand has never shown vou anything but kindness?' red, but stubbornly refused June turned to answer, wracked her brains for while Felicity a clue that might girl's extraordinary behaviour. Then, in explain the a flash. her. it came to

know why!' exclaimed Felicity. 'You're jealous 1 of Freddie. of how clevershe is at jokes and tricks. Because you desperately want to be the third form's bad girl, the only who can play tricks and make people laugh.Well, June, that you're vou've certainly proved bad girl a one's laughing.' but no

June was now as white as she had been red, and she said harshly, 'Very cleverof you, Felicity. Have you finished now?'

'Not quite,' said Felicity. 'We have yet to hear you offer an apology to Amy, or Mrs Dale, or Freddie for what you've done. And you must see that you owe them one, all three of them.'

'Iknow that!' said June, growing angry. 'And I *shall* apologise to them,in my own time and without any prompting from you, Felicity.'

'I'm glad to hear it,' said Felicity. 'And for your sake, June, I hope that Amy decides not to report the matter to Miss Grayling. I wouldn't want to be in your shoes if she does!'

June went away smarting. She always hated to be told off, and Felicity had made her feel very small indeed.

meanwhile, wasn't looking forward Freddie, Mrs Dale at all. She and Amy made their way to seeing after afternoon school, and were silent on her cottage the short walk, each girl lost in her own thoughts. As the little footsteps seemed cottage came into sight, Freddie's to drag, though were trying to put off the as she dreadful everything to when she would have to confess moment lady. But then they were at thegate, and Freddie the old Amy. 'We're here.' turned to



Mrs Dale springs a surprise

'Why, I wasn't expecting to you until Sunday!' see exclaimed Mrs Dale, as she opened the door to the two girls. 'And you've brought someone else to visit me. Come both of vou.' along in,

She led both girls into her tiny living-room, where they small sofa. Mrs Dale's cat, Sooty, side by side on sat a who had become firm friends with Freddie, jumped up knee and rubbed head against on to her his her arm, madly. Then he spotted Amy, and wondered purring liked cats too. Sooty jumped stranger from Freddie's lap little start, for to Amy's, and the girl gave a pets and was rather nervous wasn't οf used to them. But overlook this, and curled Sooty was prepared to up on her lap, his approval when Amy tentatively stroked his purring head.

'Well, Amy,' said Mrs Dale, now that Sooty had settled down to his satisfaction. 'This is an unexpected pleasure.'

'Yes,' began Freddie. 'You see, I had to come today, because -'

'Oh, - 1 wasn't talking to you, my dear,' said Mrs Dale, with a little smile.'I was talking strange to mγ grand-daughter, Amy.'

Then she looked directly at Amy, whose mouth had fallen open in shock, and said, 'That is who you are, isn't it?'

'Yes, Grandmother,' answered Amy in а trembling voice. 'Oh. it's lovelyto meet you!' Then she got SO to her feet, dislodging the cat who merely _ yawned and

Freddie settled down on again – and hugged the old was worth, for she while Freddie looked all on in astonishment, the utmost questions crowding brain. her

At last Amy and Mrs Dale sat back down again, and Freddie said, in rather a high, nervous voice,

'How long have you known that I wasn't Amy?' from the first,' answered the old lady quite ʻl've known serenely, her shrewd eyes twinkling. Ί might be old, but still have all my wits aboutme! You see, a couple of days before you turned my doorstep up on claiming to be my granddaughter, I received a letter from Amy'smother. And in it was a recent photograph her new school uniform, of Amy, in taken just before she left for Malory Towers.'

'But — but why didn'tyou say anything?' asked the bewildered Freddie, absent-mindedly stroking the cat.

'Because wanted to know what game you were playing,' Mrs Dale replied. Ί was at loss at a first, but I think I know what you were up to now. I realised the other day, when you brought June to tea. She she?' was the one who put you up wasn't to it,

Amy gave a scornful snort, while Freddie nodded and said, 'Yes, but you must believe that I didn't meanany harm, Mrs Dale. June said that you were lonely, and it seemed like a good idea at the time, but...'

Her voice trailed off miserably and Mrs Dale said, 'But your conscience started to trouble you.'

'Yes,it did,' said Freddie, looking the old lady straight in the eye. 'It troubled me a lot. And there was something else too. I grew very fond of you — and I hadn't expected that.'

'Well, I'm glad to hear it,' said Mrs Dale, her shrewd blue eyes twinkling. 'Because I grew very fond of you, too, and came to look forward to your visits, even though I knew you weren't really my granddaughter. Heavens!'

She gave a little laugh.'Do you realise that I don't even know what your real name is?'

'I'm Freddie,' the girl answered. 'And I'm so relieved that you aren'tangry with me.'

that you were a good girl at 'Icould tell heart,' said knew that you Mrs Dale. 'And I would own up sooner or for that June – well. I later. As realised that she was clapped That monkey the second 1 eves on her. Sooty from the tree. My was the day she rescued my goodness, what a long time ago that seems now!'

'Monkey is putting it mildly!' said Freddie, with a grimace. 'I was an idiot to let her talk me into this inthe first place.'

'Oh. all foolishly we act at times,' said Mrs Dale. 'I hope June comes see the error of her just to she gets herself into real trouble. She wavs before very much of myself reminds when I was that me know.' age, you

girls looked astonished at this, quite unable Both the old ladv as mischievous schoolgirl, and picture a Mrs Dale laughed at their wide-eyed expressions. once myself,' she said. 'And now, Freddie, was young going to ask vou to leave Amy and me alone for while.I'd like to get to know my granddaughter.'

'Of course,' said Freddie, getting up at once and putting Sooty, who didn'tapprove of all this activity, on the floor. 'May I come and visit you again, please, Mrs Dale?'

'I should like that very much,' said the old lady with a smile.'Only next time come as Freddie, not as Amy. And send June to see me as well. I'd like a word with that young lady!'

Freddie felt as if the weight of the world had rolled off shoulders as she made her her way back to Malory spring in step when she Towers, and there was a her

into the walked common-room. June was there alone, and she looked Freddie entered. up as lt was a rest of thethird form lovely, crisp, sunnyday outside and the the were making most of it by getting some fresh air. But nobody had askedJune if she wanted to go with them. Not that she cared tuppence, for she would much rather girls whose be on her own than with a group of her was all disgust and disapproval of too plain. There was moment's awkward silence, then Freddie, who felt so a that she could almost forgive June, cleared happy her asked, 'Where throat and is evervone?'

'They're all outside.' answered June, heartened by the fact that Freddie had broken the ice between them. pauseand then she 'Er another asked, how There was Mrs Dale's? Was she very angry with you?' did it go at surprisingly enough, she wasn't.' 'No. said Freddie and, keep it herself unable to to any longer, she into her tale. June was astonished, of launched course, and asked a great many questions, feeling quite as relieved as that everything was all right. Freddie

'Of Amy will still have to tackleher mother,' course, said Freddie, when she reached the of her story. 'Can end vou believe that anyone would be stuck-up and SO ashamed snobbish to be of her own mother? as June, doesn't it make vou feel grateful Honestly, have ordinary, sensible parents?'

heartily with this, then, after a moment's June agreed rush, 'Freddie, ľm silence, said in a sorry. I placed very uncomfortable situation, and one that could in have got into a lot of trouble. hope that you 1 vou'll accept apology, and that the of my two us can friends. Though if don't want to, still be you 1 won't vou.' blame

'I would like us to carry on being friends, June,' answered Freddie, her expression quite serious.

'But first I must know why you put me up to impersonating Amy. Because I know that it wasn't concern for Mrs Dale that made you do it.'

have to 'You're right,' said June, realising that she would be completely honest with Freddie if their friendship was ever to get back on its old footing. So she told Freddie the truth how she had begun to feel iealous of her, and hadn't wanted Freddie sharing and glory June received from the others for in adulation the tricks. And how petty and spiteful sounded when she her it aloud! No wonder Freddie looked said it shocked, if June wouldn't blame the girl she decided that she her friendafter all. But didn't want to be Freddie said, 'Thank vou for having the courage to be honest with me, June. And if we are to remain friends, you must Even if it go on being honest. means telling me don't want to hear sometimes.' thingsthat I

will,' she said. 'And you must solemnly. 'I June nodded steadying influence on me, and try to talk try to be a the crazy ideas I with.' of some of come up me out

'I'll do my best,' said Freddie, with a grin. 'But I doubtif anyone could stop you once you've taken it into your head to carry out one of your madcap schemes!'

So. when the rest of the third form poured in, from their walk in rosycheeked the grounds, it was to find June and Freddie chatting together amicably. Some of them exchanged surprised glances but Felicity, who felt that the third form there had been quite enough ill feeling in recently, was pleased and, knowing that the others would follow her lead, said cheerily, 'Hallo, vou two! Amy? Still at say, Freddie, where's her grandmother's?' that had And Freddie had to relate, once more, all Mrs Dale'sfor the benefit happened at of the rest of the third form.

'Well!' said Nora when she had finished. 'So the old lady knew all along that you weren't Amy. She tricked you far more successfully than you tricked her, Freddie.' 'Good for her!' laughed Julie.

'And you didn'thave to through the unpleasantness go after all,' of owning said Susan. Ή bet that up was a relief, Freddie.'

There was more good news when Amy came back, just in time Felicity had been a little afraid that Amy, once for supper. might not she got to know her grandmother, get on with because was not as grand the rest of her she as her family. was plain from the brightsmile on girl's But it the face that she had had a veryhappy time with Mrs Dale, and was overioved have met her at last. Amy also announced to graciously that she report Freddie was not going to and Freddie, June to Miss Grayling. who guessed that she had Mrs Dale to thank for this, was extremely grateful, while June said, 'Thank you, Amy. Freddie and and I got up appreciate it. And I want you to know that I'm really very sorry for the part that I played in thisbusiness. lt would completely my fault, and Freddie never have thought of pretending to you if I hadn't put the idea into be head.' her

slight hesitation, Amy took June's After only a while Felicity breathed a hand and shookit, outstretched sigh of relief. June's frank, open apology had done much to third formers lighten the mood of the and they admired being brave enough her to make it in front of for all. Perhaps, at last, things were beginning settle down a to bit.

But everything was sorted out, of not course. Bonnie Veronica were still very cool towards Felicity, and another, while Amy still flatly refused towards one to make up with Bonnie. Felicity, who felt rather guilty about the rift two girls, tactfully broached the between the subject

with Amy later that evening, suggesting that she and Bonnie clear the air between them, but she was brushed off.

'Iknow that you mean well, Felicity,' said Amy stiffly. 'But Bonnie deceived me. And, quite frankly, I've had enough of deceitful people to last me a lifetime!'

Felicity guessed, of that Amy was referring course, to said no her mother and more, deciding that it would be foolish push the when the girl had so to matter much mind. on her

herself And Bonnie went up to Amy in the third formers ready for bed. Bonnie had dormitory, as the got been deeply way Amy had been kept apart shocked at the from her grandmother, and the incident had made her think of her own doting grandparents, who had always played large part in her life and whose spoiling she a had rather taken for granted. She felt very sorry for Amy, who had missed own grandmother's out on her loving companionship for many years. For probably first time SO the life, Bonnie genuinely wanted be of help and in her to comfort to someone else.

'Amy, I'm pleased that your meeting with your SO went well today,' she soft voice. grandmother said in her 'Have you decided what you're going to sav to your mother?'

Bonnie looked But Amy merely at coldlyand said, 'Did Felicity tell vou to come and speak to me?' 'Of not!' said Bonnie, deeply offended. 'l'm course you, that's all.' iust concerned for

'Amy need your concern,' butted Veronica, doesn't in who had been hovering nearby, listening jealously. 'She that she knows can always rely on me times of in trouble.'

'l'm herself.' sure that Amy can speak for snapped giving Veronica look of dislike. 'Amy, Bonnie, a you might not friendany more, but I'm yours, whether be my

you want me to be or not. And I shall be here if you need me.'

other than a But Bonnie received no response look rather despondently, of icv disdain SO, she own bed, while Amy and Veronica each climbed to her into theirs.

'What *are* you going to do aboutyour parents?' whispered Amy. 'My word, your father's going Veronica to to be simply furious with your mother when he finds out what has been going on all these years.'

answered Amy in 'Yes, he is,' a low voice. 'But I'm afraid that can't be Mummv helped. has brought it all on going to herself. I've decided that I'm tackleher the at when she come over for weekend, and Daddy birthday. my Veronica. I don't know how she Really, can have imagined, even for second, that Daddy would look down on a Grandmother! He wealthy, he's awfully may be but hearted. and would never disapprove of simply someone they don't have very much money.' because

'And what aboutyou, Amy?' asked Veronica curiously. 'How do you feel aboutyour gran?'

'Why, I love her, of course,' said Amy, sounding surprised Ί did from the rather the question. at her. She is grandmother, after all!' moment saw my 'Of course,' said Veronica. 'But what I really meant _′ was

She stopped suddenly, realising that the she question wasn't wanted ask very tactful, and to Amy gave a soft laugh,realising all at once what Veronica wanted to know.

'You mean do look down on her because don't you?' she she isn't wealthy. said. 'Well, I don't, surprising it may seem.l know that I'm stuck-up as of other thingsthat people and snobbish, and all the say aboutme probably always will be. and 1 But

somehow it's impossible to look down on someone you love.'

felt rather this. Hadn't Veronica guilty on hearing she looked down on her own parents and thought that they weren't good enough for her? Well, she had learned all right at half-term, and she understood her lesson now. 'No,' she exactly how Amy was feeling murmured. quite right, Amy. You can't look 'You're down on the people vou love.'

Her voice was becoming drowsy and, beside her, Amy stifled a yawn.

'No more talking now, girls,' came Felicity's voice. 'It's time for lights-out.'

And, one by one, the third formers drifted to them thinking that the sleep, each of last few days had been indeed, and wondering what the remainder of very strange the term had in store.



A bad time for Felicity

The following day started badly for Felicity, who was putting her shoes and socks on when the breakfast bell went, only to discover that one of her laces was missing.

'What *are* you doing, Felicity?' asked Nora, astonished to see the girl dive underthe bed in search of hermissing shoelace.

'One of my laces is missing,' came Felicity's muffled voice from underthe bed. 'Blow! Where can it have gone? I know they were both here last night.' 'It must have fallen out,' said Julie.

'Laces don't just fall out,' said Felicity, who was now crawling roundthe floor. 'And they don't simply disappear into either. 1 can't go down to breakfast without thin air it, shan't able to keep my shoe on.' or 1 be ʻl've spare pair of shoelaces,' said Susan, got a the rescue. 'You can borrow coming to one of them.

Now do hurry up, Felicity, or you'll get into a row from Potty.'

Quickly Felicity threaded the new lace into her shoe and raced downstairs after the others, reaching the dining-room just in time to avoid a ticking off from Miss Potts. Ί can't think where went,' my shoelace said Felicity she buttered slice of to Susanas a toast. 'Well, I shouldn't worry about it much,' said too 'It's not lost something valuable, Susan. as if you've like jewellerv or vour purse. Perhaps someone removed it while you were asleep, for prank. daresay it'll a turn up later.'

Felicity decided that Susan was probably right and thought no more about the matter – at first.

June's mind seemed somewhere else at breakfast. to be Indeed. she was so that she would have put preoccupied salt in instead sugar, if Freddie her porridge of hadn't hand to been on stop her.

'Whatever is the matter with you?' asked Freddie. 'You've been in an absolute dream since you got out of bed!'

'I've just been thinking,' answered June. 'I've apologised to you, and I've apologised to Amy. Now all I need to do is square thingswith Mrs Dale, and once I've done that I'll feel as if I can wipe the slate clean.'

'Yes, I think you should get it over with as soon as possible, then you'll feel much better,' agreed Freddie. 'She's a decent old soul, and I don't think

she'll be too cross with you – especially as you remind her of herself when she was young.'

Ί couldn't believe it when you told June laughed. me that, and I still can't imagine dear, kindlyMrs Dale pranks on her teachers!' She sipped playing tea and went on decisively, 'I'm going to slip across and see her lf the lunch-break. I over there quickly in run as I've eaten, 1 there and back again in soon as can be time for English this afternoon.'

Freddie nodded in approval at this plan, while at the other end of the table, Julie said, 'Felicity!

Don't forget that you said you'd lend me your spare pen.

Mine's broken and I shan't have time to go and buy a new one until the weekend.'

'Oh yes, I *had* forgotten!' exclaimed Felicity. 'It's in the common-room. I'll go and fetch it on the way to Maths.'

But when Felicity and her friends popped into the common-room a little later, her spare pen was nowhere to be seen.

'That's strange!' said Susan, looking baffled. 'I could have sworn that you put it in your lockerlast night.' said Felicity, frowning. 'Half a could I,' 'Yes, SO minute, though! lent it Nora, I to you, remember, because you had left yours in your desk. You're that you must have forgotten to give it scatterbrained back me.' to

'I did give it back to you, Felicity,' insisted Nora. 'I'm sure I did.'

did,' put remember seeing 'Yes, in she Pam. 'I her hand it you. But goodness knows where to you put Felicity, first you lose your shoelace it. Really, then you misplace your pen! You're getting quite as scatterbrained as Nora.'

wasn't But Felicity at all scatterbrained, and had been brought take care of up to her things. It wasn't like her all to lose something, or forget at to where she had put it, and she began to feel a little worried.

can't stay here all 'Well. we morning hunting for a Ί don't think that Miss Peters would pen,' said Susan briskly. think that an for acceptable excuse us being late. Julie, you'll have to see if one of the others has a pen you can borrow.'

girls quickly made their way to third-form So the the classroom, where, fortunately for Julie, she was able to borrow pen from one of the SouthTower girls. Miss a look at all Peters did not kindlyon girls who turned badly prepared and without up to her classes the equipment! correct

Felicity, however, continued to puzzle over her belongings. It wasn't as if missing they were expensive possessions, or thingsthat were particularly important to her, items that couldn't be replaced. lt was just verv annoying!

her word, June sped across True to Mrs Dale's after lunch, and Freddie was waiting for her bv school gates when she returned, relieved the the to see smile on the girl's face. happy

'Mrs Dale is the nicest, most decent person have ever met!' she declared. 'Of course, she gave me a bit off, but that was only to of a ticking be expected. Then she started telling about some of the tricks she me had played when she school. and told her was at aboutthe vanishing cream, and we got along like a house fire! She's given me some simply super ideas for on tricks as well.'

'Tell me about them later,' said Freddie, taking June's arm and walking briskly up the drive. 'If we're late for

English we shall be in trouble with Miss Hibbert, and you don't want another ticking off.'

The two girls got to their classroom just before the English mistress and were spared a scolding, but alas for Felicity, she very soon got into trouble with Miss Hibbert.

'We're going to carry on reading through the play that vesterday,' said the started mistress, once the class was we 'Openyour scripts seated. at page three and...Felicity, please pay attention!'

who had been rummaging around in her Felicity. desk. and said, 'I'm sorry, the lid hastily dropped find my Miss Hibbert. but I can't seem to script.' 'Really, as head of the form you're Felicity, supposed example to the others,' to set an said Miss Hibbert, sounding exasperated. 'It's most unlikeyou to careless. Well, you will just have to share Susan's script SO for now.'

Her face flaming, Felicity moved her chair closerto her thoughts raced. Susan's, She had put the script as back in her desk after English yesterday, she was absolutely certain of that! To mislay one thing might be carelessness absent-mindedness, put down to or but this was the third thing that she had lost today. An unwelcome Felicity's head. Was someone suspicion entered playing very funnyone, for prank on her? If SO. it wasn't a into hot waterwith Miss Hibbert. had got her Her heart occurred to her that, perhaps, sank as it the culprit for get into trouble, meant her and she to glanced other girls in her form, wondering which of roundat the them could be capable of such spite. She was certain that it was a third former, for nobody else could have sneaked classroom and the dormitory the into the and common-room think without being spotted. But there was time to no aboutthat now, for Felicity had to give her full attention Miss Hibbert and the reading of the to play.

her suspicions to She Susan later that afternoon, voiced the two of them sat wooden bench in the on a as courtyard, and her friendlooked very serious indeed.

'Imust admitthat thought occurred to me too,' said Susan. 'But who on earth could it be? Not Pam, or Nora or Julie, that much is certain.'

'No, we can certainly rule them out,' said Felicity. 'We've known them since we were first formers together and them would think of none of doing anything SO beastly to me. 1 don't think it's the kind of thing Freddie would either. There's do no shortage of suspects, I've upset Bonnie, Amy and Veronica recently though. though Amy does seem to have got over it, and I honestly think she has too much on her mind at the moment to bother aboutplaying silly, spiteful little tricks me.' on

Susan agreed and said gravely, 'I hate to say this, Felicity, but there's someone else it could be.' 'Who?' asked Felicity in surprise.

'June,' answered Susan. 'Don't forget that you told over that business her off with Mrs Dale, and that won't have gone down well. If there's one thing that June hates it's being made to feel small. You can't deny that she has a malicious streak in her nature, and we all know that she can too!' hold a grudge

Everything that Susansaid was true, but Felicity hated to think that June, who had also come up through the school with them, was capable of such spite against her, even though they hadn't always been the best of friends.

know that 'No,' she said at head. 'I last, shaking her June was angry with me scold, but she also for giving her a knew that she deserved it. Besides. if she did have a against she would tell so to my face grudge me me front of too! No. and probably in evervone this hole stuff isn't like June at all.' and corner

But Susanwasn't convinced. 'She has done this kind of thing before,' she said. 'Remember when we were in the first form and she sent those horrid anonymous notes to Moira?'

aboutthat! Moirahad Felicity was silent. She had forgotten all been a very unpopular and rather domineering fifth former who had got on the wrong side of June. And June had retaliated by sending the girl a series of unpleasant But she had been foundout, and it anonymous notes. was that June hadn't only thanks Moira's intervention to been expelled.

'Yes, she was only a first former then,' said but Felicity at last, looking troubled. 'And almost being really shookher expelled and taught her up а lesson. Surely she wouldn't do anything like that again – she?'

said Susan, 'Ireally don't know what to think,' frowning. 'But perhaps tell Pam. Nora and Julie that we we should suspect someone is playing these mean tricks on you, then all keep our eyes open and look out for us can suspicious.' anything

'Good idea,' said Felicity. 'Oh, Susan, do hope that isn't June! It's bad enough think that there's someone it to third form who dislikes in the me enough to take mv thingsand get me into trouble _ but it's even worseto could be that I've known think that it someone for vears!'

girls foundPam, Nora and Julie down at The two the stables. all of them fussing over Jack. To their astonishment, Bonnie was also there, feeding sugar to black horse, Peters's big Midnight, and patting his sleek, dark neck. Felicity noticed that the girl looked а little when Midnight whinnied, and she shied away from him nervous when he tossed his big head.

'I didn'tknow that you liked horses, Bonnie!' said Susan, in surprise.

lot of thingsyou don't know about me, 'There are a Susan,' Bonnie, rather loftily. Then she said final pat and whispered to Midnight him, 'I'll be back a you tomorrow, boy,' before of the walking out see stables. pointedly sticking her nose in the air she as passed Felicity.

ʻl'd love to know what she's playing at,' said Nora, suspiciously after her. 'Julie says that Bonnie has staring been to she's never shown see Midnight every day this week, yet any him – in any of the horses interest or before.'

'She's a funny little thing,' remarked Pam. 'I don't quite know what to make of her!'

'Well, never mind that now,' said Felicity. 'Susan and I have something we want to tell you.'

And Pam, Nora and Julie listened open-mouthed as the two girls told them that they were certain someone was playing malicious tricks on Felicity.

'I believe you're right!' said Pam. 'It's not like you to be careless with your belongings, Felicity.'

'I'll bet it's Veronica!' Nora said. 'You know that she did something very similar to Katherine of the fourth form, of course?'

'No, I didn'tknow!' said Felicity, looking shocked.
'When was this?'

ʻlt was when they were in the second form together,' said Nora. 'Apparently the two of them fell out over something can't remember what -1 and strange thingsstarted happening to Katherine, just as they have to you, Felicity. Her thingswent missing, and some of her work was deliberately and some of and eventually her friends spoilt, Katherine caught Veronica red-handed. That'swhy the fourth formers always disliked Veronica much, and, if SO vou ask me, it's why Miss Grayling decided to keep her down into the fourth with us instead of going up form this

term. I think she wanted Veronica to have a fresh start with a new form.'

'And instead it looks as if she's been up to her old tricks again,' said Julie, looking quite disgusted.

'How jolly mean of her, especially as vou were so kind to her at half-term, Felicity.' 'Let's find her and have it out with her!' cried indignant her friend's behalf. Susan, on

said decisively, 'No, we But Felicity can't. We don't have Veronica who is any proof that it's behind this, and it would be dreadful thing if a we accused her wrongly.'

'You're quite right, old thing,' said Pam. 'Noneof like us Veronica. but just because she's done this kind of thing before doesn't mean that she is responsible this time.' 'Well, I'm going to be watching her,' said Susan. 'And ı catch her in if the act she had better watch out!' but don't let know that vou're her watching her,' Julie. 'If we don't want to warned it is Veronica, put guard.' her on her

There was quite a lot of going on the spying in third form over the next couple of days. Susan, of course, was watching Veronica. Felicity, meanwhile, kept an eve June, for of all the girls she suspected, June was the one she desperately hoped was innocent. And Nora and Julie were watching Bonnie not because they thought that she was the person playing tricks on Felicity, for both of them thought was responsible – privately that Veronica but thev know what was behind the were extremely curious girl's to sudden Midnight. interest in

Saturday morning, when they were busy They foundout on grooming Jack. Miss Peters came into the stables to saddle up Midnight, only to find Bonnie there petting him and feeding very fond him a carrot. Midnight had grown of whinny softly when she Bonnie, and would approached

nuzzling her shoulder. him, before Bonnie, in turn, had fear of the big horse and quite lost her thought him He swallowed bit sweet. the last of carrotnow black head on and rested his Bonnie's shoulder, while she threwher arms roundhis neck and said in her lisping voice. 'Dear Midnight, what a lovelyhorse you are! Miss Peters is SO lucky to have you.'

'Why, Bonnie!' cried Miss Peters, coming up behind the girl. 'I had no idea that you and Midnight were such good friends.'

Miss Peters, I didn'thear you come in!' said 'Oh. Bonnie. turning her big brown eyes on the mistress. absolutely adore Midnight, though 'Yes, I | must admit1 little afraid of horses until I got to know was a But he's so sweetand gentle that now I can't believe was!' what a silly I

underthe astonished eyes of Julie and Nora, Miss And, who loved Midnight more than anything Peters anyone else in the worldbeamed at Bonnie and 'I'm glad that he said kindly, has helped vou to overcome your fear. Perhaps you would like take me to him one day, Bonnie? I lead him while you out on can vou sit on his back and just get used to being on а horse.'

'Oh, Miss Peters!' cried Bonnie ecstatically, her eyes shining. 'That would be simply marvellous.'

'Very well,' said the mistress, putting the saddle on to the horse's back. 'I can't take you out now, for I've arranged to meet Bill and Clarissa, but perhaps one day next week?'

again, and waved Bonnie thanked Miss Peters off her she led Midnight out into the yard before nimbly as him and riding off. Then, as the clip-clop the mounting horse's faded into the distance, she turned hooves to

the two third formers and said sweetly, 'Looks like you owe me a stick of toffee, Nora.'

And Nora had to laugh.Bonnie was quite a determined little character once she had made up her mind do to something, even overcoming her fear of horses because she knew that Miss Peters kindlyon anyone was sure to look who liked her beloved Midnight. She really was the strangest girl!



Veronica in trouble

The following day, Sunday, was Amy'sbirthday and the girl had with mixed feelings. been looking forward to it The normally excitement she would have felt was dimmed. because knew that she would have to tackleher she mother told. All aboutthe lies she had the same, it was pleasant wake up chorus of 'Happy Birthday' from the to to a knew that she wasn't the third formers, and she as most popular girl the form Amy was both amazed in _ and delighted to find that everyone had bought her gift. They were only small things of bath salts from a iar chocolate from Felicity and hair-slide from Pam. Veronica. a but Amy thanked and smiled roundpleasantly. She everyone bathroom wash, and when she came back there went into the to bed, wrapped silver paper was a large parcel on her in with a bow on Curious, she ripped it top. open and gave gasp. For there was the dress that Bonnie had promised a her. The two girls had chosen the material together before they quarrelled, and Amy had assumed that Bonnie was no longer going make the dress. But here it was, and what to had super job Bonnie done!Amy'seyes shoneas she held a pale pink dress against and Nora said, 'My word, Amy, her beautiful! Is that's simply that Bonnie's work?' 'Yes, is,' it answered Amy, glancing across at Bonnie, who was sitting her bed, bending over to tie on shoelaces, apparently unconcerned, but inwardly hoping that her generous gesture would mend the rift between herself and Amy. And that it had done the it seemed trick, for Amy walked Bonnie across to

and, a little awkwardly, said, 'Thank you, Bonnie. That was very kind and thoughtful of you.'

Bonnie looked and said, 'I'm glad you like it.' up ʻllike very much,' said Amy. 'You must have worked it like a Trojan finished time for to get it in mv birthday. shall wear it todav.' 1

Immensely gratified, Bonnie smiled. Then she became again and said, 'Amy, please serious can we befriends again? ľve missed you so much and I that promise ľl be *true* friendto you from now on.' a

little tired of And Amy, who was becoming Veronica's a someone to chat company, and missed having to about hair-dos clothes, and agreed. Of course, Veronica was not all pleased that the two girls had made up at their guarrel, for she had enjoyed having Amy to herself and now it seemed that she would have to vie with for Bonnie attention her again.

Amy's parents collect her lunchtime and. came to at down and greet them, Felicity as the girl got ready to go goes well for you, Amy, said to her. 'I do hope that all and that your father isn't too angry and upset with your mother. We shall be thinking of you.'

And the third formers did think of her, often, that day, for although Amy hadn't done much to endear herself to them, they were good-hearted girls and wished her well.

But Felicity had problems of her own to think about. for her belongings were still going missing, and she friends and her were no nearer to finding out who was. Only yesterday, she had discovered her the culprit hairbrush had gone, and she had to borrow Susan's. she thought, it stealing, but the things the Really, was thief was taking were items that were of no value at all. What good was one shoelace, or script for a play? a

Only this morning said to Susan, don't she had Ί understand. Why doesn't she help herself to or my purse, my birthday?' the watchthat my parents gave me for 'Ithink I understand,' said Susan, who had been giving the matter lot of thought. 'Whoever it is doesn't a want these thingsfor herself, she's taking them to annov you.'

'Well, she's certainly succeeding!' said Felicity. 'But she's going to have to stop soon or I shall have nothing left for her to take!'

Well. there was no point sitting around brooding about now. Amanda a lacrosse it, she decided was holding practice shortly, she might as well go along to that. SO Susanhad mentioned that she would like to well. go as SO Felicity sped off to find her. Susanwasn't in the common-room, SO Felicity went up to the dormitory to if there.But as approached, she was she Felicity heard sound of raised, angry voices coming the from inside. Cautiously, she pushed open the door, and frowned that the two girls who were rowing she realised as were looked Susan and Veronica! Veronica upset and tearful, while Susan was obviously very angry indeed. And on the floor between them was the photograph of herself, Darrell and their kept on her parents that Felicity cabinet, its glass shattered.

'My photograph!' she gasped. 'Whathappened?'
'You had better ask dear Veronica,' said Susanin a hard voice. 'She can probably tell you where your missing thingsare as well.'

'No!' cried Veronica. 'I bumped into your cabinet, Felicity, and the photograph fell off and smashed. Susan came in and saw me bending over it, and jumped to conclusions.'

'But what were you doing near my cabinet anyway?' asked Felicity suspiciously. 'Your bed is at the other end

of the room,so you had no reason to be over here at all.' 'I — I was looking out of the window,' stammered Veronica.

'What a lame excuse!' said Susanscornfully. 'We might be more inclined to believe you, Veronica, if we didn't know that you had done this kind of thing before.'

Veronica turned white and Susanwent on, 'We know that you played mean tricks on Katherine, when both of you were in the second form. And now you're doing exactly the same to Felicity.'

was mean to Katherine,' said Veronica 'ladmitthat I of sob. 'And the form never forgave rest the me, matter how hard I tried to show that I was sorry. In it the end I decided wasn't worthbeing nice to them.and turned into the sly, sneaky creature they had already decided 1 was. But I haven't played tricks Felicity!' on

'Idon't believe you,' said Susan, disgusted a expression on her face. 'You were caught out and now talk your way out vou're trying to of it. Why can't you decency and give Felicity her things have the to own up back?'

'Because I don't have them!' yelledVeronica, tears running down her cheeks now. 'Felicity, you must believe me.'

think aboutall 'Veronica, I need to this,' said Felicity, hardly able to look at the girl. She felt quite certain that Veronica was guilty, but at the same time she couldn't help feeling a little sorry for the girl.

'Come on, Susan,' she said at last. 'We'll be late for lacrosse practice if we don't hurry.'

that Felicity's mind was on lacrosse all. She at was quite unable to concentrate and didn't play up to her usual standard at all. whichearned her a few sharp words from Amanda.

'Never mind, old thing,' said Susan, as they made their way to the changing-room afterwards.

do mind!' said Felicity 'But 1 crossly. 'Blow Veronica! Not only has she been plaguing me with these ruined tricks, but she's probably chances spiteful mγ of getting into one of the teams this term as well!' 'Are the Head abouther?' asked Susan. you going to go to

'I don't know,' sighed Felicity. 'As this is the second time she's done something like this, Miss Grayling will probably come down pretty hard on her. She might even expel her!'

'Well, it's quite her own fault,' said Susan unsympathetically. 'She simply can't go around behaving like that and expect to get away with it.'

111 sleep on it, and decide whether or not to the Head tomorrow,' decided Felicity. report her to we'd better let 'And I the others know that suppose we've solved the mystery.'

Veronica didn't put in an appearance at teatime, and Mam'zelle Dupont frowned when she saw the two empty places at the table.

'Who is missing?' she asked. 'Ah yes, Amy is out with her parents, is she not? But where is Veronica?'

'Idon't think she was feeling very well, Mam'zelle,' said uncomfortably. Felicity feeling that someone oughtto make an for Veronica's absence in case the excuse French mistress decided to make enquiries.

'Ah, la pauvre!' said Mam'zelle sympathetically. 'If she feels no better tomorrow, she must go to Matron and have some medicine.'

'Idon't think Matron has any medicine that will cure a guilty conscience,'muttered Susan underher breath to Felicity. 'This proves that she's the one who was playing tricks on you, for she's afraid to come and face us.'

'What *are* you talking about?' asked Pam, who was on Susan's other side and had overheard some of this.

'We'll tell you later,' said Felicity in a low voice, leaning across. 'You, Nora and Julie come to the little music-roomafter tea. I don't want old Mam'zelle listening in.'

So, as soon as tea was over, the five girls rushed off to the music-room, and there was an outcry when Pam, Nora and Julie heardthat it was Veronica who had been behind Felicity's troubles.

'The mean beast!'

'I knew it was her! A leopard never changes its spots.'

'And to think that she didn'teven have the courage to own up when she was caught in the act!' 'My word, won't I tell her what I think of her when I see her!' said Julie angrily.

said, 'Please don't say anything But Felicity her Julie. I think about whether tonight, need to I'm going to not. Besides, - 1 tell the Head or should think that Amy trying day, and I has had quite a don't want her walking bad atmospherewhen she comes into a back.'

'It's jolly decent of you to feel like that and to put Amy first,' said Pam warmly. 'But I suppose that's what makes you such a good head-girl.'

Felicity turned quite pink with pleasure and said, 'Do you really think that I'm a good head-girl?'

'Ithink you're first class,' said Pam firmly. 'You always consider other people's feelings, you're kind and helpful – and you're not domineering.' 'Hear, hear!' chorused the others.

'Thank you!' laughed Felicity, feeling very pleased indeed. 'Now we'd better go to the commonroom, before the others send out a search party.'

'Iwonder if Veronica will be there,' said Nora. 'Don't Felicity, 1 shan't worry, sav anything to to the others vet.' her, or

Veronica was in the common-room, looking very pale and red-eyed — and so was Amy. She was telling Bonnie and Veronica abouther day, and the others gathered roundto listen.

'Mummy didn'teven attempt make any excuses for to herself, once she knew that I had met Grandmother,' 'She said that she had Amy was saying. intended to tell Daddy the truth once they were married, but that somehow the longer off the she put it harder it got.'

'Well, I can sort of understand that,' said Freddie. 'Was your father simply furious?'

'He was, rather,' said Amy, with a grimace. 'And hurt that Mummy thought wouldn't terribly he want to marryher simply because hadn't been her parents bit wealthy. He had come rounda by the time I said goodbye them though. He simply adores Mummy, to can never stay cross with her for you see, and he very long. Grandmother helped. We And meeting went there after lunch.and she and Daddy are firm friends now.'

'That is good news!' said Felicity, happily. 'But how did you explain your father's rather sudden change of heart?'

'Well. we couldn't tell her the truth, of course, for would have hurt her too much,' said Amy. 'So we it just said that Mummy and I had talked him roundand how foolish he realised and snobbish he had been. Poor Daddy had apologise to Grandmother and, I to must say, he did it very convincingly. I never realised that he was such a good actor!And the best thing of is that Daddy is going to find

Grandmother a little housenear ours, so I shall be able to see her in the holidays.'

must have been the best birthday of all!' 'That present cried Susan, marvelling at how happy Amy looked. 'Yes. it was,' agreed Amy. 'Oh, and Grandmother bakedme the most *enormous* birthday cake, to bring back to school with me. We'll all share it at teatime tomorrow.'

The third formers rubbed their handstogether at this, and there were cries of 'Jolly decent of you,

Amy!'

who had been looking Then Freddie, rather wistful. and said, 'I shall miss Mrs Dale awfully. sighed think you're lucky to ı do have her as a gran, Amy.' 'Well. she'll be here until the end of term,'said Amy. 'And know that she'd like you to visit her again before she leaves, Freddie.'

That Freddie cheered up, and it was a happy of third formers bed a bunch who trooped to up little later. Apart from two of them. Felicity had been Veronica while they were in surreptitiously watching the thoroughly miserable, common-room, and the girl had looked lost in her own thoughts and hardly uttering a word. And was deeply Felicity herself. of troubled. course. she knew that she would soon have to make decision a about whether or not to report Veronica to the Head. If only it was clear cut, but when the girl had been of troubles with Katherine earlier. of talking her and efforts to how her form had snubbed her make amends, Felicity had caught glimpse of that humbler, а softer Veronica that she had seen at halfterm. The decision that affect Veronica's whole Felicity made would future. and felt the responsibility weighing heavily slim girl on her shoulders.

At last Felicity fell asleep, and when she awoke her mind was clear. If Veronica went unpunished, and thought

that she had got away with her mean tricks, it could lead her into far more serious trouble.

She signalled Pam, Julie and Susan, Nora to stav to behind in the dormitory as the others went down to breakfast. and told them of her decision.

'I really do think that you have made the right decision, Felicity,' said Susan. 'And I only hope that Veronica learns something from all this. When are you going to see Miss Grayling?'

ΉΉ go right after breakfast,' said Felicity. 'lt's not going pleasant. and I'd rather to be get it over with as possible.' soon as

'I know that Veronica's behaviour has been despicable,' said Pam, with a frown. 'But I hope that Miss Grayling doesn't expel her.'

Suddenly a little squeal sounded from behind girls and they all group of turned sharply, to see Bonnie startled look on face. standing there,a her

'Bonnie!' cried Felicity. 'I thought that you had gone to breakfast.'

'I was in the bathroom,' said Bonnie, an odd expression on her face. 'Pam, why should Miss Grayling expel Veronica?'

Pam exchanged a look with Felicity, who nodded and said, 'There's no reason why you shouldn't tell Bonnie the truth. Everyone will know soon enough.'

'Well, Bonnie, we foundout that Veronica was responsible for Felicity's thingsgoing missing,' Pam told the girl. 'Not only that, but she smashed her photograph.'

Bonnie said nothing, but just stood there looking absolutely stunned, and the girls, knowing that she was no friendof Veronica's, wondered why.

you feel all right?' say, Bonnie, do asked Julie. 'Yes, but 1 need to speak to Felicity privately,' said twisting her handstogether agitatedly. Bonnie,

'Would the rest of you mind awfully leaving us alone?'

bursting with curiosity, the others went off So, to breakfast, while Felicity wondered what on earth Bonnie wanted. The girl hadn't spoken to her at all absolutely had to, whatever she had lately, unless she SO extremely important. to say must be



Veronica getsa chance

'Whatis it, Bonnie?' asked Felicity, who was hungry and didn't want to get into trouble for being late in to breakfast. Bonnie didn't answer. Instead, she went to the little cabinet beside her bed and pulled out a cardboardbox, whichshe passed to Felicity.

'Take a look inside,' she said.

Felicity removed the lid and gave a gasp. For there belongings. Her insidewere her missing pen, the script of the play, a shoelace and all the other thingsthat she had mislaid recently.

don't understand!' exclaimed Felicity, 'But looking perplexed. 'How did they come to in your cabinet, be Bonnie? ask vou hide them for Did Veronica to her?' This seemed most unlikely, given that Bonnie and Veronica were hardly the best of friends, but Felicity could think of other explanation. no

not,' said Bonnie, 'Of gazing course doe-eyed at didn'ttake your things. Felicity. 'Veronica Ιt was me.' sitting 'You?' said Felicity, down plump upon her bed, astonishment. great was her 'But but why, Bonnie?' SO 'To back for of course,' pay you being mean to me, answered Bonnie simply, though was the most as it normal thing in the world for her to have played tricks on Felicity. 'You see, I spiteful thought you were friend. foundout that you weren't, And then, when I my 1 was terribly angry. But, of course, quite see

that I couldn't let Veronica take the blame and possibly be expelled, much as I dislike her.'

Felicity was quite speechless for taken aback as moment, a Bonnie's matter-of-fact honesty as by the realisation much by that she was the who had been playing pranks person her. At last she foundher voice and said, 'Yes, it on would have been very wrong of you to let Veronica take the blame. But, Bonnie, didn't it also occur to that it take my thingsin the first was wrong to place? Why, it's stealing!'

'Of course it isn't!' said Bonnie. 'I never meant keep your stuff. Why, what on earth would want with to odd shoelace and a copy of script that | an a have?I always intended alreadv give you your to end of things back at the term. And I couldn't think of you.' way of another getting back at

Felicity, had a Bonnie. thought way of explaining the most extraordinary thingsso that they seemed quite ordinary! She tried once more to impress upon the girl that she had done wrong, saying, 'But you must have that I was annoyed and upset about my known things going missing?'

did,' said Bonnie, nodding her 'Yes, I pretty head. 'But that was the whole point.I mean to say, what's the good of playing those kind of tricks on someone if it doesn't bother them?'

'Yes, but Bonnie, the thing is that you *shouldn't* those tricks on all,' have played me at said Felicity earnestly. 'I understand that you felt hurt, but that isn't the deal with thingsat Malory Towers.' way that we 'Really? Very well then, I shan't do again,' it said Bonnie blithely. 'Oh dear, Felicity, do the look at time! We shall get dreadful row if into a we go down breakfast now. Not that I'm very hungry, are you?' to 'Not any more,' answered Felicity, sighing. 'Bonnie, you realise that I'm going to have to do

Susan and the others about this, don't you? Not to mention Veronica herself.'

'Must you?' said Bonnie, pouting a little. 'I was rather hoping that we could keep it just between the two of us.'

'Well, we can't,' said Felicity firmly. 'The others terrific Veronica because they think that have a down on she was behind all those tricks on me, and I must set them straight. And as for Veronica herself - my goodness, dreadful it must be simply wrongly to be of something when you know that you are innocent! must that her tell her as soon as possible name has been cleared.'

suppose that you must do 'Yes, that,' agreed Bonnie, little reluctantly. 'Though 1 suppose a means that everyone will turn against me now. How horrid!' But somehow Felicity knew that Bonnie, who was a great deal tougher than she looked, would cope with the situation in her own way.

'The sly little beast!' cried Susan, when Felicity broke the news to her, Nora, Pam and Julie after morning school.

'That's the though,' thing about Bonnie, remarked Pam 'Even when she's being sly, she's quite honest thoughtfully. say, she was going to it. 1 mean to au nwo what to she had done and give Felicity her things back all along. So really, she's *not* being sly.'

'She certainly has her own, unique way of looking at things,' said Nora, shaking her head. 'Although some of her ideas are quite wrong, of course.'

'Idaresav some of our ways will rub off on her when she's been at Malory for while,' said Julie. Towers a 'That's school the best of a splendid like this – as well as learning thingslike Maths and English and all the rest of it, you learn other thingsthat are equally

important. Things like a sense of decency, fairness and responsibility.'

But Susanwas less inclined to be lenient and, when the other three girls had departed, she said to Felicity, 'I hope that you are going to let Miss Grayling deal with Bonnie.'

Ί hadn't really thought aboutit,' said Felicity, biting her lip. 'Do you think that I should, Susan?' 'Of course!' said Susan firmly. 'You were going to don't see what the report Veronica to the Head, so 1 difference is.'

'There *is* a difference,' said Felicity. 'Bonnie hasn't been to school before, and she doesn't fully understand __'

'Oh, Felicity, don't *you* start sticking for her!' Susan up ought to interrupted impatiently. 'At her age she know the difference between right and wrong. Not having been to school before can't be used as an excuse for simply everything, you know!'

Felicity knew that Susan was right. But she also knew that Susan well as Bonnie, for was angry at herself, as she had been of first one to accuse Veronica directly the playing tricks on Felicity. So she slipped her arm through Susan's and said, 'Don't fall let's you and I out about this, old thing. That would be worsethan anything! ľШ think about reporting before do anything else, Bonnie, promise. But 1 must apologise Veronica.' to

Her anger cooling instantly, Susangave Felicity's arm а and said ruefully, 'You're squeeze not the only one who owes Veronica apology. very quick to an 1 was accuse her, and didn'teven bother listening to her explanation because had made my mind up that she guilty. This will was be lesson to me not judge people certainly a to too hastily, tell you. Come along, let's go and find her 1 can now.'

alone, Veronica was standing glumly watching a tossing formers group of second a ball around, and sorry for her. A both girls felt thought occurred and she said, 'I that Veronica's going to be Felicity bet pushed out, now that Amy and Bonnie have made up.'

Susan agreed and said, 'I never thought that Amy was very keen on Veronica The two of anyway. them have absolutely nothing in common. can't say that ľm terribly fond of Veronica, but it must be simply dreadful having one to talk to. share no or to fun and secrets with. What a can't help her pity that we some way.' in

can,' said Felicity, 'But excitedly. 'You see, Susan, we think that there's another side to Veronica а side. I've kind, decent seen it once or twice and I think that if we hard really hard try perhaps we can bring it out.'

make up to Veronica Susan, eager to for accusing her unjustly, once, 'Whatdo said at you have in mind?' 'Well, I iust think that we oughtto give her a vou know,be nice to and chance her include her in things. Now that Amy isn't so eager for her think she might take the chance company, I that we are offering.'

'Yes, let's do that,' said Susan. 'Though 1 think can it who won't want any part of and that's of one person June. She's never had any time for Veronica, she's bound and pour cold water on the idea.' to

'June can jolly well do she's told and follow as our lead for once,'retorted Felicity, determined expression on a her face. 'And if she dares to sneer at me I shall have few words to her!' а say to

And, looking at the glint in her friend's eye, doubtthat Felicity Susanhad no just that! But would do now they had another deal with, and matter to Felicity didn't beat around to Veronica and the bush, going across

saying frankly, 'Veronica, I know now that it wasn't you who took my thingsand I'm sorry that I didn't believe you when you said that you were innocent. Please accept my apology.'

She held her hand out and Veronica, looking a little disbelieving at first, took it, and said, 'What's happened? Have you foundout who really did it?'

'Yes,' said Felicity. 'It was Bonnie. She owned up when she foundout that I suspected you.'

sorry too, Veronica.' 'And ľm said Susan, coming forward. Ί saw you standing over the broken photograph believe the and was ready to worst of you. It was verv of me.' wrong

Veronica, looking both surprised and pleased, turned said, 'No, it wasn't. lt's quite my own fault red and people think badly of me, I see that now. And I admit didn't like first, Felicity, that I you very much at but who showed could never do a mean act to someone the kindness that vou and your parents did at half-term. No matter what happens between in the future, us that is something I shall never forget.'

Now it was Felicity's turn to red, for she felt go Veronica's little speech auite moved bv and there doubting could be the girl's sincerity. **Susan stepped** into no 'Felicity and I were just off breach, saying, the Why don't you come along with us, Veronica?' lacrosse practice. Amazed, and secretly delighted to be asked, said, 'There's Veronica point in no me coming. ľm not lacrosse for that very good at or any games, matter.'

'Perhaps not, but you can still come along to watch, and shout a few words of encouragement to Susan and me,' said Felicity. 'Goodness knows we could do with them!'

So came about that June and Freddie, it were already on the lacrosse field, were quite astonished to Felicity, Susan and Veronica, of all see three girls chattering coming them, all people, towards amicably together.

'Our dear Veronica seems to have made two new friends.' drawled June, once Veronica had taken her place on Susanwere on sidelines and field. the and Felicity the 'Really. Felicity, know that you always like to see the 1 best in people, but surelyeven you must see that you're your time with her.' wasting

'You're wrong, June,' said Felicity, refusing to be ruffled by June's mocking tone. 'Susan and I have decided to give Veronica а chance to prove that she's not people think. And as bad as - [form, including would like the rest of the you, June, to follow lead.' our

June laughed and said jeeringly, ʻl'm not sucking up that sly, spiteful beast.If you ask me –' to But further, for Freddie June got no piped up unexpectedly, push and sharply, 'No one giving June a saying did ask you, June! You oughtto be the first to Veronica chance. considering the way you have behaved this term.'

'Freddie is quite right,' said Susan sternly. 'At least Veronica has learned something from her mistakes, but I don't think that you have, June.'

'Oh, June has nothing to learn,' said Felicity, giving the girl a hard look. 'She knows it all, don't you, June?'

Disconcerted by this sudden attack from all sides, June was lost for a suitable retortand Felicity went on, 'The that nothing trouble with you, June, is makes know that you regretted lasting impression on you. I Freddie involved with Mrs Dale and were shaken getting

caused. And I'm willing to that you by the upset you bet told Freddie _ and yourself that you learned had you haven't. Now that you've your lesson. But been concerned, you're forgiven by all back to your bold, bumptious, hard-hearted old self again.'

'Yes. and you promised me that you would do me, if only I anything to make it to would up forgive you,' said Freddie. 'Well, June, if you really mean that, I want you to back Felicity up and at least *try* Veronica.' to be nice to

admitthat there was a lot June had of truth in to the others' words, and she certainly didn't want to fall out with Freddie again,so she said, 'I know that I can be hard, sometimes – it's just the way I am. My cousin Alicia same, though she softened little as was the a she bumptious, Alicia older, and perhaps - 1 will too. As for being say that I was like а ball – used to rubber no tried to squash me matter how hard anyone flat ı that will always bounced back into shapeagain.Perhaps well. And you're all absolutely right about change one day, as one thing – I have behaved dreadfully this term and I should give

Veronica a chance to prove that she has a good side. And that's exactly what I intend to do.'

That Felicity. was good enough for June had her faults bad faults – but if said she do she would а thing she stuck to it.

Veronica was also doing her best, and surprised herself by becoming completely wrapped up in the practice game that took place, excitedly calling out her encouragement to the others.

'Play up, Susan!'
'Jolly good shot, Felicity!'
'Oh, well done, June!'

June took a particularly difficult This last came as ball past the goalkeeper. goal and managed get the at to when June heard Veronica's cry And Felicity was pleased her, giving her turned to smile at a cheery wave. With only one week to go to the end of term, perhaps thingswere finallysorting themselves out. Now, if only Felicity could decide what to do about Bonnie!

Felicity took a little time to herself after tea walk to alone in the grounds and consider the problem, but as to she dusk began fall was no nearer a solution. Bonnie certainly needed be to brought to a sense of herwrongdoing, learn that she couldn't take and to every time someone upset her. She was spoilt, vain and revenge quite unscrupulous when it came to getting her own way. But, Felicity had come to realise. the girl actually had too. She was single-minded few good qualities and determined when she sight, honest afraid had a goalin and not herself. better speak up for And where than to Malory for Bonnie to cultivate Towers learn to these strive to make the qualities and good in her character the bad? cancel out

So lost thought she, that Felicity didn't in was realise she had walked as far as Miss Grayling's private front of garden, until the Head herself appeared in her. you, Felicity!' 'Why, it's she said in surprise. 'Whatare doing over here, my dear?' you

aboutsomething, Miss Grayling, Ί and didn't thinking was realise that I had come so far,' said Felicity. ή had make my suppose that I better way North Tower.' back to

hard at Miss Grayling looked the girl for then said, 'Actually, moment, ľm glad you're here, for there's something I wanted to discuss with you. Comeinto my study.'

Felicity followed Miss Grayling across her neat little lawn, the French windows her study, and through into wondering what the Head wanted talk to her about. Not more to trouble, surely?

Miss Grayling took a seat behind her big desk and her, then she began, Felicity opposite invited to sit speak to about Veronica Sharpe. wanted to As vou vou probably aware, she wasn't very popular with her are back for own form, which is why I decided keep her to term, to see if a break from the girls who disliked a much would of her SO do her good. As head-girl the third form, I know what you think of her.' want to

'Well. we'vehad few problems with Veronica,' а said Head had Felicity, feeling very honoured that the asked her opinion and wanting to be as honest as possible. been awfully 'And she hasn't popular with our form either. think that, underneath it But I all, she's actually We're all doing our best quite a decent person. prove herself, she give her chance to and a seems it.' taking to be

'That hear,' said Miss Grayling. good to is 'You see, Veronica really too old stay down in the Felicity, is to third form for more than a term. I have discussed the matter with Miss Peters and we both feel that Veronica next term. She oughtto join the fourth formers will have long break from them, and they from her, so had a hopefully able to start afresh.' they will be

Felicity hoped too. Perhaps SO she oughtto have a talk with Katherine, who was now head-girl of the fourth, and see if she could persuade her to let bygones be If Katherine was willing hold out the bygones. to hand friendship to Veronica, the rest of the fourth were sure to well. Then it occurred to formers do SO as that, if she Felicity was going to report Bonnie to any. The good a the Head, now was as time as

was, deep down inside, she *didn't* want to involve Miss but would far rather keep what she had done Grayling, third-form matter. Was it weakness her private on like that? Felicity hoped not, for feel she part to SO wanted to be a strong leader. like Darrell had flittedacross the girl's mind, Miss Grayling's been. As these thoughts keen blue eyes watched her, seeing a lot more than realised. At last the Head asked, ʻls Felicity anything you, Felicity?' troubling

'Er – no, Miss Grayling, of course not,' she answered, nerves making her voice rather high.

'Are you sure?'asked Miss Grayling. 'You know that if you have any worries you can always bring them to me. That is what I am here for, after all.'

Felicity hesitated. Could she tell the Head what was on name into it? mind without bringing Bonnie's She decided 'Well, you see, Miss Grayling, to try and began, ľve problem with a the third form. It's girl in quite a a trivial matter, and I think that I would rather deal with it myself than report it. But I can't be certain that I am doing the right thing, eitherfor the form for the girl concerned. I keepasking whole, as a or myself what Darrell would have done in this situation, but –'

'My dear Felicity, what on earth does Darrell have to do with the matter?' the Head interrupted sharply.

'She always sure of herself,' said Felicity. was SO marvellous Head Girl. Somehow I feel that if 'And such a make the wrong decision, will be letting her down myself.' well as as

Head Girl,' agreed 'Darrell was Miss Grayling. an excellent 'But that isn't to sav that she never made mistakes, particularly lower down the school. wasn't when she was Darrell nobody I recall that she perfect is. had an

extremely hot temper that caused her problems on a number of occasions!'

The Head smiled she said this, and Felicity as 'She still smiled shyly back, saying, does have a hot temper, though she has learned control it a lot to better now.'

'Exactly,' said Miss Grayling. 'She *learned* to control it. As vou, Felicity, will learn to have faith in your own instincts and your own judgement. You see, Darrell isn't head of third form very different the *you* are. And you are from Darrell. you must stop wondering what she would SO do in this situation, or that situation. As for how you should well, deal with the matter brought you up think you have already answered that yourself. Do what vou be feel is right. It may turn out to the wrong your decision.' decision, but at least it will be

Felicity listened Miss Grayling's words to And, as wisdom, everything suddenly became crystal clear in of mind. She had worried too much about what other people thought of her, and about whether they were comparing her older sister. Being a unfavourably to her strong leader didn't always mean being outspoken, or forthright. It meant being true to vourself and your own character. And from now on. thought Felicity, as she said goodbye to the Head, that what she was going to was exactly be!



A happy end to the term

The last week of term simply flew by, and there was an great excitement throughout the air of school as thegirls look forward began to to Christmas, pantomimes and parties.

'My first term as head of the form is almost over already,' said Felicity to Susan. 'And my word, what a term it's been!'

'It's certainly had its ups and downs,' agreed Susan. 'Thank goodness the last few days have been mostly ups!'

Amy'sbeen a lot happier since that business with was settled.' Felicity. 'And her grandmother said even **Bonnie** has been showing bit of common sense since a gave her that talking to.'

Felicity, having decided that she wasn't going to for her behaviour, had taken the girl report Bonnie bad to one side to inform her of the fact. Bonnie, however, didn't seem to realise what a lucky escape she had had, merely smiling and saying off-handedly, 'Oh. before thanks, Felicity,' bending her head over the sewing she was working Felicity had stared down at the on. girl's curly head for few moments, before coming a to Bonnie another decision. might have been spared a from Miss Grayling, dressingdown but Felicity was jolly well going tell her what standard of behaviour was expected of to a Malory Towers girl.

Bonnie listened open-mouthed and, when Felicity finished to squeeze out her stern little speech, she managed a tears. Felicity, though, was guite convinced that they weren't and were just an attempt to gain sympathy, so genuine remained quite unmoved by them. And. over the next few days, she noticed that Bonnie did seem to be making an effort to behave more sensibly, which pleased Felicity immensely feel that her words fallen on and made her hadn't completely deaf ears.

Even Susan, who had thought that Felicity had made a mistake in choosing to deal with Bonnie herself, had to admitthat she had been wrong.

'Bonnie certainly have turned seems to over a new leaf.' she said now. 'And as for Veronica well. she's completely different like a person. That'sthanks to you well.' as

Felicity brushed this off with her usual modesty, feel a small stirring of satisfaction she couldn't help but she watched Veronica laughing and jokingwith Pam as way that would and Nora in have been quite a couple of weeks ago. Felicity unimaginable a had kept the promise she had made to herself, and spoken Katherine of the fourth form about Veronica. to

Fortunately, Katherine was a good-hearted and she girl agreed to persuade the fourth formers to make Veronica feel welcome when she joined them the next term. 'Inever thought would say this, but - 1 shall actually miss Veronica moves into the fourth,' when she up said Felicity. 'Now that she's put her spiteful ways behind her, she's really a nice person.'

'And she's got quite a sense of humour too,' said Susan. 'My goodness, I thought she was going to burst with laughter when Freddie and June played that trick on Mam'zelle Dupont yesterday.'

Veronica hadn't been the only one who had nearly burst, for the trick had been very funny indeed!

waited until Susantook her book up Freddie had to Mam'zelle's desk to have her work marked, then let out a scream, whichcaused the French mistress to start violently, sending a shower of small blots over book. Susan's

'Mon dieu!' Mam'zelle cried angrily. 'Freddie, you bad girl! See what you have made me do? I have ruined the poor Susan's work. What is it that makes you scream like that?

'A s-spider!' Freddie stammered, making her eyes big and scared. 'I'm sorry that I startled you, Mam'zelle, but I do so hate spiders.'

In fact, Freddie wasn't scared of spiders at all, but Mam'zelle was, and she turned quite pale. 'Where go?' she asked, did it her voice quavering a little.

'It scuttled across the floor towards your desk, Mam'zelle,' Freddie answered.

Poor Mam'zelle looked most alarmed at this, her beadyeyes rapidly scanning the floor around her desk.

'I see no spider,' Mam'zelle said at last. 'Freddie,

if this is a trick...'

'It's no trick, Mam'zelle,' Nora piped up, very seriously. 'I saw it too. It was huge — almost as big as a mouse!'

Mam'zelle gave a little shriek, but Felicity said soothingly, 'It's all right, Mam'zelle. I think it escaped underthe door and went out into the corridor.'

'Ah, thank goodness,' Mam'zelle sighed in relief, adding unnecessarily, 'Me, I do not like spiders.

Susan, ma chère, I am sorry that I have spoiled your so-excellentwork. You may go and sit down now.'

Susan, who knew that she had made several mistakes, was at all sorry and went back to her seat thankfully. For not next few the minutes the lesson progressed smoothly, then. when Mam'zelle turned write something on to the blackboard, Bonnie let out a loud squeal. Once again, Mam'zelle the jumped, chalk that she was holding skidding across blackboard before the she whirled roundto face the class. Mam'zelle!' Bonnie 'The spider, squeaked, before the 'lt's French mistress could speak. back! I saw it run up your desk.' the leg of

Mam'zelle backwards, swaving leaped high heels on her and almost overbalancing, causing Nora to let out one of snorts. Fortunately Mam'zelle was too her terrific preoccupied hear it and she called out, 'June! You to not afraid of spiders. You not afraid of anything! are the creature.' Come out here and search for

So June, managing to keep her face remarkably straight, went over to Mam'zelle's desk and walked slowly around ridiculously solemn that it her expression so was too much girls. Felicity shook for some of the with silent laughter, while Pam and Julie had tears pouring down their cheeks. As for her shoulders heaved she Veronica, as struggled to control her mirth!

June said, 'I Αt last can't see the spider now. Mam'zelle. Perhaps check inside your desk, to 1 had better make sure that it's there.' not hiding in

Mam'zelle this June lifted the agreed to at once, so lid of desk and rummaged around insidevery thoroughly, the making а lot of quite unnecessary noise as she all the with a ruler. But poked in corners no spider emerged and, feeling was safe to that it do SO, Mam'zelle sent June back to her seat.

Then she almost collapsed into her own chair, saying, 'Poof!My heart,it goes pitter-pat! I have the palpitations!'

she reached into the large, black handbag And carried everywhere with her, pulling out her handkerchief so that she could mop her brow. But something else fell out Mam'zelle's bag as well – the most enormous spider she had ever seen in her life! The girls had seen June slip it into the French mistress's bag as she pretended to look for Mam'zelle hadn't. the spider, but Poor Mam'zelle was completely unaware that the spider wasn't real, but was. rubber one that Alicia had sent to in fact, the her cousin. front of landed the desk in lt on her with a plop and, for the French second, mistress could only stare a helplessly at enormous beast,frozen in Then the terror. her feet so that her chair she jumped to suddenly crashed to the ground, and she let out a scream than eitherFreddie's far louder or Bonnie's had been. cried in 'June!' she anguish. 'Rescue me from this once!' monster at

obliged immediately, bustling the front of June to class and putting her hand over the the spider. one!' she 'Heavens, it's big exclaimed. 'Are you sure you a Mam'zelle?' don't want to keep it pet, as a

was quite sure, shouting,

ʻlt

is

abominable!

Mam'zelle

Remove it at once, June, I beg of vou!' class, June picked And, to the delight of the up the spider by one of its legs, shaking her hand so that itlooked if the creature was trying to as escape. Mam'zelle gave a shudder of revulsion, while the third quite unable contain their mirth now, laughed formers, to helplessly.

them, Miss Potts was taking Unfortunately for the classroom, and had wondered form in the neighbouring next door. Eventually the on earth could be going on that she become SO intrusive had hardly been able to hear herself the first formers speak, looking at one bewilderment. another in

too bad! Miss Potts thought This to herself crossly. Mam'zelle must have left the room for a moment, and the third formers are taking advantage of her absence play the fool. They really are old enough to to know better! And the mistress sweptfrom the room, rapping sharply the door of the third-form's classroom. However, the class on such an was in uproar that no one even heardthe Miss Potts pushed open the door, halting knocking, SO on the threshold her keen eyes took in the scene before as Mam'zelle, in a state her. There was of great agitation, girls reduced to tears of laughter, and June, in helpless the thick of the action - as usual!

'Mam'zelle!' she said loudly. 'Whatis the meaning of this?'

The mistress's stern voice and expression effectively sobered the third formers. and their laughter died away, as Mam'zelle cried, 'Ah, Miss Potts!There is spider! As a a big man'sfist. But it.' the dear June, she has captured

'Has she, indeed?' said Miss Potts drily, turning her steely the suddenly sheepish June. And, at once, Miss Potts gaze on saw what Mam'zelle hadn't that the spider _ was a trick one.

you, June,' she said 'How brave of sarcastically, before turning back to the French mistress. 'Mam'zelle. I should take a closerlook at that spider, if Τ were vou.'

that, Miss Potts went out, shutting the door none too With her, while Mam'zelle stared after her, halfgently behind and half-puzzled. Had Miss Potts gone mad? Why indignant she, Mam'zelle, want to take should а closerlook at the spider? She wanted far away from the to get as spider possible! She turned backto face the as class. and suddenly realised that all the girls were looking rather apprehensive. EspeciallyJune, still standing in front of her very still holding the spider. Α spider, which wasn't

wriggling or moving at all now. All at once, the truth dawned on Mam'zelle – she had been tricked!

'June!' she 'You are girl snapped. bad a you are you have tricked all girls, for bad your poor Mam'zelle. Go to your seat now, and I shall decide what punishmentto give you.'

The third formers were extremely subdued for the rest though of of the lesson. every so often one or other them couldn't help smiling she remembered Mam'zelle's as if reaction to the spider. lt would be a shame they were punished, of course, but at the same time what a super trick it had been!

the lesson, Αt the Mam'zelle stood up end of and looked roundthe class with sombre dark eyes. At last, she 1 said heavily, have decided on your punishment. You will all of you write me an essay in the holidayson the habits of spiders French!' in

There was gasp of dismay this, as the girls a at aghast. They had *far* looked at one another, more than write a do holidavs important thingsto in the Didn'tMam'zelle realise beastly French essay! that it was Christmas?

The French mistress looked with satisfaction at expressions of horror on the girls' faces. Then a slow smile spread over her face, and she began to laugh.'Hah!'she Mam'zelle, who have tricked cried. 'Now it is ١, vou! There essay for will be you to do in the holidays. But no punishmentwill you are all wicked girls, and your to work twice as hard for me next term!'

'We will, Mam'zelle! We promise!' everyone calledout at once, both relieved and delighted.

'Good old Mam'zelle!' chuckled Felicity as the girls filed out of the classroom.

'Yes, she's a real sport,' said Susan.

first-rate 'And that was a simply trick, June and Freddie,' said Pam, grinning. 'My word, I thought I should dropped die laughter when that spider of to Mam'zelle's desk.' 'Super!' agreed everyone.

As she recalled the trick now, Felicity said. with a little sigh, 'Oh, what fun we'vehad. I'm so looking forward to going home, and Christmas, and seeing my parents and Darrell. But know that in a couple of weeks ı shall be simply dying to get back to Malory Towers again.'

'I wonder if you'll see much of dear Bonnie during the holidays,' said Susan, and Felicity gave a groan.

The only thing marring her anticipation of the Christmas holidays was the thought that Bonnie would still be living down the road. The two of them had been getting along a now that the been cleared lot better air had between them, though it was obvious that Bonnie was happy her friendand no longer worshipped with Amy as Felicity. But the lingering fear that, when she was separated from Amy, Bonnie would cling to her again, would not away. go After all. one could never be quite sure what was going on in Bonnie's head!

But there was one final piece of good news for Felicity. Two days before the end of term, Bonnie came up to her, a letter in her hand.

'Guess what, Felicity?' she said. 'I've had a letter from we're moving! Mummv _ and Daddv has got a job in we're going to another part of the country, live SO shall be leaving days after Christmas.' there.We few a

knew what to Felicity hardly say, but at last she managed, 'Well, I'm ľm hear that, er very sorry to Bonnie. 1 shall miss you.' um _

Bonnie looked hard at Felicity, then went off into а You'll be peal of laughter. 'No. vou won't! jolly glad to the back of admit it!' see me _

Bonnie didn't seem at all offended, so Felicity grinned and said, 'I wouldn't quite that far. You know, Bonnie go bad really. You've you're just got not SO some ideas aboutthings!' rather strange

'So you keep telling me,' laughed Bonnie. 'Well. I shall be coming back to Malory Towers after the holidays, SO perhaps then I shall learn how to be a Malory Towers schoolgirl!' proper

'Well, let's hope so,' said Pam later, when Felicity repeated this conversation. 'She does seem to have gained a *little* common sense just lately.'

'Yes, but I just hope her parents don't go and undo the good work we'vedone,' said Felicity.

'They're bound to thoroughly spoil her over Christmas.'

'And there's someone else who will completely spoilt be goes home,' when she said Julie as Amy walkedby. 'I what fabulous gifts Amy'sparents wonder are planning to Christmas!' her this bestow on

'Mrs Dale will keep her feet on the ground all right,' said Freddie. 'Or at any rate, she'll do her best to.'

'Well, jolly good luck to her,' said Nora, who wasn't particularly interested in Amy or Bonnie, but was looking forward spending time with her to own family. 'My word, only two days to then we shall be go, home! Where has the term gone?'

No one could answer that, but the next day flew by even faster, and then it was the last day.

hall noisy The big entrance was very crowded and girls and mistresses said their goodbyes, invitations to as Christmas parties were exchanged and parents who had collect their daughters joined the come to melee.

'Goodbye, Miss Peters! Goodbye, Mam'zelle Dupont!' 'Don't eat too much Christmas pudding, will you, Pam?' 111 the pantomime on see at Boxing vou Day, Susan.'

'Felicity, your parents are here! They're outside.' And was time for Felicity to leave.She ran it outside and father, to greet her mother stopping when she got to the big front door to say, 'Goodbye, shall miss Malory Towers see you next term. I you!' And we shall miss you, Felicity. But we'll see you again very soon.

