

Gladys Hungerton Gea, the most beautiful girl Ned had ever met, was his friend but nothing more. McArdle, recognizing Ned's ambition, suggested he visit Professor Challenger, a zoologist known for his outlandish claims about his travels in South America. Challenger had sparked controversy, with some believing him a liar, others a truth-teller. He sought advice from Tarp Henry, a scientist and friend who confirmed Challenger's reputation for bizarre stories and impossible claims. Ned, determined to prove himself, was intrigued by the mystery surrounding Professor Challenger. Despite Henry's doubts, Challenger accepted, and Ned found himself at Challenger's doorstep, clutching a letter of invitation in his hand.