

The White Cockatoo

by Mignon G. Eberhart

Chapter 46 WHO IS "FRANCIS"?

"WHAT do you—Go on."
"Don't interrupt me, please," said Lorn crankily. "It's very simple. You see, when Tally came to consult me he'd just slipped on a wet street in traffic and got involved somehow with a taxicab and flying glass. It wasn't serious, he told me, but his face was heavily bandaged. That was, of course, fully six months ago. And 've not seen him since."

"Where was that meeting?"
"In New York."
"Was he the same general build as this man?"

"Of course," said Lorn impatiently. "Do you think I haven't tried every test? I'm willing to admit that he may have deliberately got himself up to give me no definite way of identifying him again. But whatever was the purpose, the fact remains that I can't tell whether this man is Francis Tally or not."

"But this man recognized you. Spoke first. Called you by name. The scorn in Lorn's gaze made itself felt though he was still in the shadow."

"Have you failed to consider a possible connection between the Lovschlem and this man? Of their informing him carefully of everything they have managed to discover? In case—of course—he is actually not Francis Tally?"

"No—" I said slowly. "No—I've not failed to do that." Several things returned to me. Grethe's sudden activity after that period of curiously patient, cat-like waiting; the way she'd looked at the newcomer when he floundered; the way his eyes had sought hers there in the lounge—had it been for guidance?

Briefly I told Lorn of the timetable Lovschlem had tried to conceal; he too, he agreed, had noted the curious effect the man called Francis Tally gave of looking to Grethe for help.

"The thing to do," said Lorn, "as I see it, is simply to sit tight until the Paris detectives come. They'll make an end to things in a hurry."
"But, Miss Tally—" I said.

"We'll advise her to hang on to her token, take no chances, and wait for the detectives. In the meantime—" He paused, and then continued: "I may as well tell you, Sundeen, that I think I know what the motive power is."

"You mean," I cried excitedly, forcing him for once to a definite statement, "the murderer?"

"Don't ask me any more now, Sundeen. And I must go. Tell Miss Tally what I've told you, will you?"

We walked together to the stairway. He went down, met Mrs. Byng and Sue on the landing, crossed the lounge and entered the lobby. At the desk Lorn paused and spoke to Lovschlem. Yet—of course, that did not mean that Lovschlem was, after all, the murderer.

I TURNED to meet Sue and Mrs. Byng.

"I suppose," Mrs. Byng was shouting, "that we must eat dinner in this den of perdition. But don't worry darling." She moved ahead of us in the narrow corridor, walking with a strange stiffness and lack of freedom brought on probably by her entangling argument with Sue.

Sue dropped back a little with me, and under the continued boom of Mrs. Byng's voice I asked to see Francis's letter again. "Envelope and all," I said. "As soon as possible."

She nodded. "I'll get it."
Mrs. Byng, still talking, stopped in her own room, closed the door, and I heard her lock it. I went into Sue's room with her and she handed me the square white envelope. I took it and moved under the light to look at the address more closely.

"That light is very dim," said Sue. "I'll turn on this one over the table."

She moved to the door; I heard it close and waited for the little click of the light switch. It did not come. I heard her light footsteps behind me, and the bottom dropped out of the world.

"Put up your hands," she said coldly and crisply.

I felt the cold pressure of a pistol against my neck.

"I mean it," she repeated in a hard voice I'd never heard before. "Put up your hands."

It was impossible to obey. In fact, and in spite of that ominous cold touch on my neck, I believe I was too numb with shock to lift my hands.

Then slowly I turned. The girl backed away so that she still held me in range of that small pistol. The girl was not Sue Tally—or rather she was—she was the girl I knew as Sue Tally.

For when I said slowly: "Who are you?" she replied: "I am Sue Tally. I've told you twice to put up your hands. This gun is loaded, and I'm a good shot." I stood there looking at her. She was of the same general height and build as Sue but lacked Sue's fineness of wrist and ankle and delicacy of proportion. She was fair, too, and wore her hair like Sue's. She was even dressed in a black velvet coat, like Sue's. But she did not resemble Sue in the least. A general written description of height, weight, and coloring might have applied to them both, but they were not at all alike.

Then a horrified question crashed upon me. Where was Sue? What had happened? Where had she gone?

"You don't want to shoot me," I said. "It won't do you any good. There are too many gendarmes in the place for you to escape."

"They are drinking in the kitchen. Paul likes having them there." She spoke a little contemptuously, but her hard eyes did not waver from mine. "I am Sue Tally," she reiterated, "and I want the paper you took from the priest's room a short time ago. Don't deny it, for I saw you. That paper belongs to me."

"So you are Sue Tally," I said thoughtfully. "I had suspected your presence for some time. Can't we sit down and talk this over more amicably?"

She did not relax her hold on the pistol and eyed me suspiciously. I went on:

"Where have they been keeping you all this time? Hasn't it grown a little tiresome, dodging the police, hiding here and there?"

She bit her lip. I thought suddenly that there was something at the same time shrewd and stupid about her face.

She said: "It was easy enough. All but those nights in the storeroom. Come, give me the paper."

So it was she in the storeroom; I had not expected that, even though I had guessed that she was about somewhere, waiting to carry out her rôle in the conspiracy.

"In the storeroom," I repeated sympathetically. "You poor girl. It must have been most uncomfortable. The smoke from your cigarettes drifted up to me one night."

"Oh, it wasn't difficult to stay out of people's way. Anyway, at a distance I look rather like—this other girl. I had this coat made like hers on purpose. Of course, I've not been in the hotel all the time. I've been staying at Paul's—the cook's house."

"Oh, so you've been staying at Paul's." I thought the girl had been bored and dull; she was probably not averse to talking to someone. Her hand did not waver with the pistol, but she was looking rather approvingly at me. "The Lovschlem's haven't been treating you very well, have they?"

It was a lucky thing to say.

"No," she flashed. "They forget how important I am to them—" She checked herself quickly, but it was too late.

"I've seen you before, you know."

"When?" she said incredulously.

"Looking from the third-story window—I suppose you were lodged there then—the night of the first murder."

She bit her lip again, and to my astonishment and intense discomfort tears came welling up into her too-large eyes. I should have preferred her to remain hard and shrewd.

"And Mrs. Byng saw you too—when you turned out the hotel lights. I suppose that was after Madame Lovschlem had said you must hide from the police who were coming."

She nodded without, I think, realizing what she was doing.

"They didn't tell me it would be like this," she said sullenly, the tears still hanging there in her eyes. "They ought to have told me." Possibly I ought to feel a decent compunction for my not too diplomatic behavior. But I didn't—either then or thereafter. I was, even, too hurried for finesse. I said with sympathy: "You poor girl. They've treated you very badly, haven't they?" And I looked at her with crazy admiration and murmured: "So beautiful—"

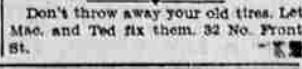
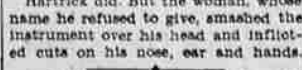
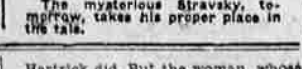
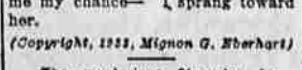
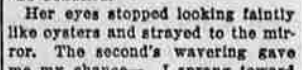
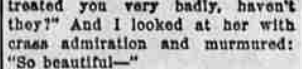
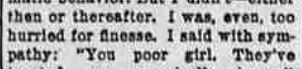
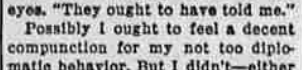
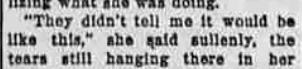
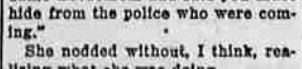
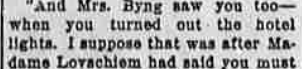
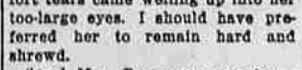
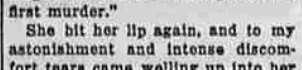
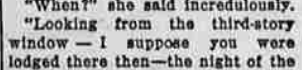
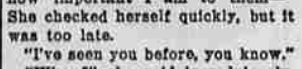
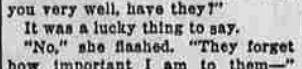
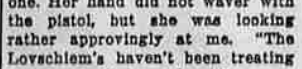
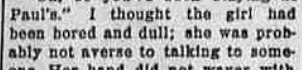
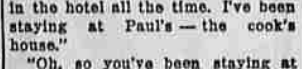
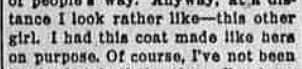
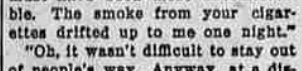
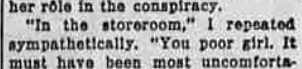
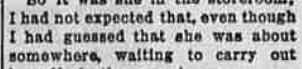
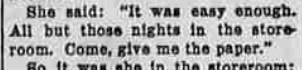
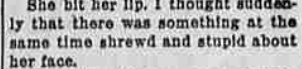
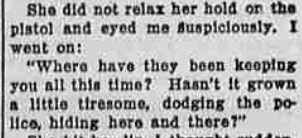
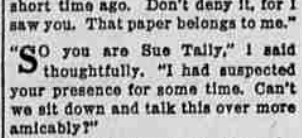
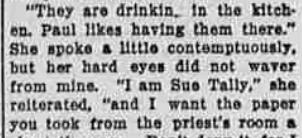
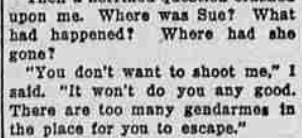
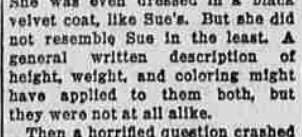
and placed flags on all the known graves of veterans of the Civil war. If any one knowing of an unmarked Civil war veteran's grave in these cemeteries will call Mrs. Watt, 819-L, a flag will be placed upon it. All daughters and granddaughters of veterans whether or not members of the order, are asked to meet at the city park Tuesday morning and march with Mrs. D. Hubbs Tent.

GRAVES DECORATED BY VETS' DAUGHTERS

Daughters of Union Veterans visited the Medford cemeteries yesterday

S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



MEDFORD AUTOISTS BOOST LOW LICENSE

SALEM, Ore., May 29.—(UP)—Four Medford residents were among the 100 Oregon citizens getting the lowest car license number for the July 1-December 31 period.

The one hundred lowest numbers were decided by lot from the applications on hand. The Medford men were A. P. Flowers, 112 E. 12th, Number 16; Frank P. Riddle, route 1, box 499, Number 59; C. M. Brewer, 1811 E. Main, Number 63; and W. C. and

Eleanor Bookard, 1508 Riverdale, Number 90.

Turner, Grants Pass, filed with the state engineer for application of 1 1/2 second feet of water from Brlar gulch, Rogue river tributary, for mining and irrigation of 8 acres in Jackson county.

Seeks Mining Water

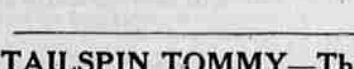
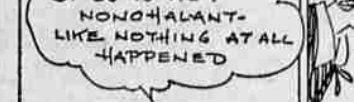
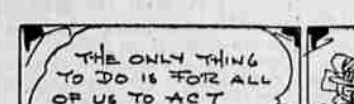
Gasoline Tragedy

PORTLAND, Ore., May 27.—(P)—Merle Gordon Sturgeon, 18, Portland high school student, died in a hospital here today from injuries suffered when he was burned, police said, by the explosion of a gasoline tank of his automobile. A member of the party, standing nearby, lit a match. The explosion followed.

By C. M. PAYNE

TRYING TO BE QUIET

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS

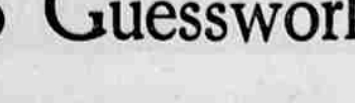
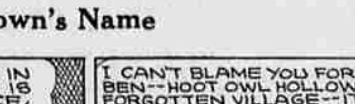
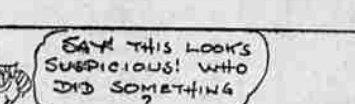


GLUYAS WILLIAMS 5-29

By C. M. PAYNE

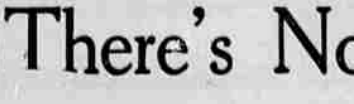
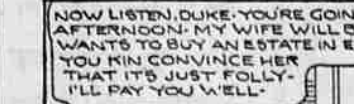
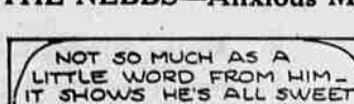
TAILSPIN TOMMY—The "Scarlet Ace" Shows Up Again

THE DYNAMITE USED BY TOMMY, GREETER AND FERRAND TO BLAST THE ROCK AWAY FROM THE ENTRANCE TO THE "TREASURE CAVE" REVEALED A FEW GOLD AND SILVER COINS, EARLY SPANISH ISSUE AND THE "FORTUNE HUNTERS" ARE NOW CERTAIN THAT THE CAVE CONTAINS ADDITIONAL HIDDEN TREASURES. HOWEVER, THEIR SEARCH FOR IT HAS BEEN INTERRUPTED BY THE ARRIVAL OF THE ISLAND OF ANOTHER AIRPLANE.



BOUND TO WIN—The Town's Name

By EDWIN ALGER



THE NEBBS—Anxious Moments

By SOL HESS



BRINGING UP F