

The White Cockatoo

by Mignon G. Eberhart

Chapter 48

THE COCKATOO AGAIN

"OH, I didn't dream the priest was Francis. The beard and all that would have changed him. He had been educated in a church school—and well educated. He knew how to manage this—disguise. How and what to do."

"After a helpless moment I said: 'But what of your own half? You'll be obliged to prove yourself to his lawyer—there'll be arrangements. I think I'd better cable the lawyer immediately.'"

"She nodded. 'Then this man calling himself Francis Tally must be actually in conspiracy with the Lovschlems. Also this charming substitute they've kept in waiting.'"

"Substitute?" said Sue, roused. "They have the substitute already?" I explained.

"And the point is," I finished, "we've got to hurry." Any plan now was dangerous for Sue. Ten millions instead of five. I said:

"I'm going to call one of the policemen to stay here with you. Then I'm going to find Lorn."

"Lorn should have known the priest was Francis!" she cried.

"He didn't. He wasn't sure about this newcomer for the same reason. And then I want you to ring for Marianne and question her. I have a faint hope that Marcel told her what he had seen. I hate letting you out of my sight, but I've got to find Lorn."

I went to the door which led to the winding stairway and thus to the courtyard. Under the swaying light of the arch stood one of our guard, and, after making sure I was unobserved, I called and beckoned to him, and once in my room he seemed to understand very sensibly what was wanted.

The corridors were as usual deserted. It was at the very door of Lorn's room that I met Grethe. She slid rather than walked out of it, closed it silently, and saw me.

"Well!" she said, and as I did not reply, she leaned nearer me and slid one smooth soft arm through mine and said: "Are you looking for me?"

I said grimly: "I'm looking for Lorn! What were you doing in his room?"

Without waiting for her reply I thrust her aside and flung open the door and looked about. The room was empty, although it looked singularly untidy. Madame Grethe was smiling a little; her green eyes were shining knowingly.

"Well!" she said again, her voice trailing upward.

"Where's Lorn?"

"Downstairs, I believe," she said coolly enough. "He was in the lobby with Lovschlem a few moments ago."

I was nearing the door to the lobby when I heard his voice, taut and sharp and strange:

"Sundeen! Sundeen! Hurry!"

I ran the last few steps.

They were both in the lobby—Lovschlem and Lorn. And Lorn had a gun in his hand, and it was trained straight at Lovschlem's fat paunch, and Lovschlem was standing there just beside the desk with his jeweled hands lifted high in the air.

"You've got the revolver?" I had it in my hand.

"Yes."

"Keep this man here while I get the police. Don't hesitate to shoot. He's the murderer."

"Lovschlem?"

"Yes. I've known it for some time, but I've got the proof now. From Marianne."

"I said: 'What is it?'"

"His connection with Stravsky. She, the maid, heard them talking the night Stravsky was killed. They were in the court. She heard—steady, there, Lovschlem!—she heard Stravsky promise to get something for Lovschlem. Lovschlem warned Stravsky to make no mistake this time. The thing was, of course, Miss Tally's token."

"Stravsky said he'd give it to Lovschlem mañana. I'll call the police. Don't let him go, Sundeen. Shoot to kill."

The door to the court whipped open and Lovschlem's terrified eyes shifted to me. This time the mumble was half coherent.

"I didn't—I'm not—I didn't—" "What's all this?" It was Grethe from the lounge.

"They say I murdered them. They say I killed—" Lovschlem's fat, bearded hands were shaking and trembling there in the air.

"Stop that," I said sharply to Grethe, and she stopped her steal-

thy retreat. "Come back here. Stand over there."

She gave me a still look but obeyed. She said calmly: "You'd as well not make a move, Lovschlem. I think our friend is rather likely to shoot us."

It was very still in the small lobby while our eyes met and locked. Very still except for the small rustle of the cockatoo scrambling from his perch to the desk. From the corner of my eyes I could see him sidle toward his mistress.

She did not move or shift her eyes from mine as the bird caught her green sleeve and pulled himself clumsily in a curious kind of hand-over-hand movement to her shoulder.

Pucci chuckled hoarsely and laid his wide bill alongside his mistress's warm red hair. But there was something wrong—something that didn't add—some quantity that was not right.

Pucci was pushing his bill into the red hair. He was pushing and pushing—not he was pulling. He was pulling at something that was thin and white and folded and that finally came entirely from the mass of red hair. It was a thin folded paper.

Madame Grethe heard suddenly some small rustle, and she moved her head and cried, "Pucci!" in a strangled voice.

"Put down your hands, Lovschlem. Give me that paper, madame."

She did so. She did not hesitate, as I had known she would not. She took it gently and carefully from Pucci and put it in my hand.

The paper was what I thought it was.

A COMMOTION of footsteps and voices arose outside, and the door was flung open and Lorn was there. Even in that hurried instant I was conscious of the singular look he gave us: it held surprise and a kind of disappointment and at the same time decision.

Lorn pointed at me and said something very sharp, and the police fell upon me, and gripped my arms.

"So," I said above things to Lorn. "So that is the reason. You must supply them with a murderer."

"There's no use talking like that, Sundeen," said Lorn. "You can't defend yourself. They will find the poison in your room, where I found it and thus was convinced of your guilt."

I was dimly conscious that the man who had called himself Francis Tally had appeared in the doorway of the lounge.

"Madame," I said to Grethe, "ask these policemen to free my arms for a moment. I won't try to escape—I couldn't."

Then, before their eyes I brought out the envelope in which Francis Tally's last letter to his sister had been sent. And I had also a small irregular piece of wax which I had found on the landing where the body of Michael Stravsky had lain.

There was not a sound while I fitted the broken wax to the half of the seal which still remained on the envelope. The two pieces fitted exactly and made one.

I said to Lorn: "You have killed and killed for the Tally millions."

"Take him away! Arrest him!" "You killed Stravsky and you killed Marcel and you killed the priest. And when you killed Stravsky because you had witnessed the abduction and Sue's return and you thought Stravsky had got her token—when you killed Stravsky you broke this wax from the seal of the letter you were bringing Sue from her brother. It fell there. It's going to convict you."

"And you killed Marcel so he couldn't tell what he knew of you. And you killed the priest because you discovered he was the real Francis Tally and that he'd seen the real Sue and that spoiled your plan. You killed him, and that's where you got Sue's token, at last. Her brother had found it and taken it—perhaps to see if it matched his own. And you trapped yourself when you did that."

"That proved that there was someone else after the token. Someone besides the Lovschlems. For it was gone. Yet the Lovschlems did not have it. And it was not on the priest's body."

Grethe said in a still way: "It's true. It was in his room. I found it."

Lorn had shrunk into his brown coat; he was only shadowed eyes and chalk-yellow face, and he no longer screamed at the policemen.

"Monday, the last link of the chain fall into place."

TO MODIFY VETS' DISABILITY CUTS

By SENATOR BYRNES

WASHINGTON, May 31.—(AP)—Senator Byrnes, (D., S. C.) told the

senate today the administration would announce in a few days an increase in the compensation to veterans with service connected disabilities. Byrnes made the statement after several senators had criticized the administration for the cuts already made under the economy act. Senator Steiwer of Oregon, said pension funds for Spanish-American

war veterans had been cut from \$124,000,000 for the expiring fiscal year to \$41,000,000 for the coming year, a reduction of approximately \$87,000,000. Byrnes, an administration spokesman, said the veterans' bureau had been working on modification of the regulations at the request of President Roosevelt.

EGG CRATE JEWEL BOX DISAPPEARS

MILWAUKEE, Wis., May 31.—(UP)—Mrs. William Samuelson asked her

husband, a grocer, to hide her \$100 worth of diamonds some place where burglars would never find them. Samuelson decided that the safest place he knew of to put the diamonds was in an empty egg crate in his store. Today police were hunting for the jewels. A commission company carted away all the empty egg crates at

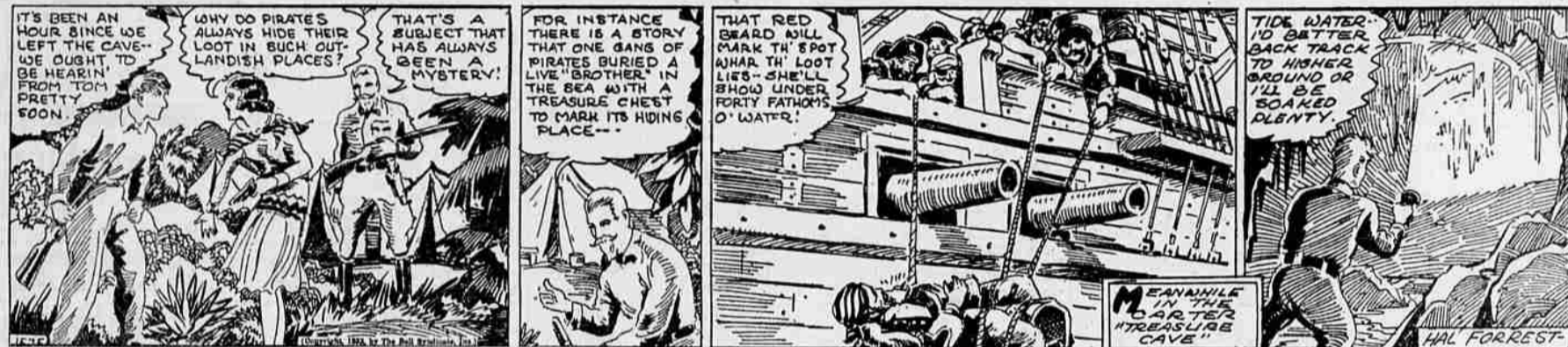
Samuelson's store, including the one with diamonds in it. Company officials believed the crate had been returned to a farmer. Pat Tracey, a nephew of the famous Roscommon giant, Jim Coffey, will make his American fistic debut April 21 at New York. He is a heavy-weight well over six feet and weighing 200 pounds.

'SMATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



TAILSPIN TOMMY—Odd Birds—These Pirates!



BOUND TO WIN—Ben Is Determined



THE NEBBS—Help



BRINGING UP FATHER



LIGHT ENOUGH TO READ BY



By GLUYAS WILLIAMS

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST

By EDWIN ALGER

By SOL HESS

By George McManus

Dutch Ulrich, right handed pitcher of the Seattle Indians of the Coast league, hitch hiked 1200 miles and walked over the Siikiyu mountains through a foot of snow for six hours in the night to report for a try-out. Fans believe the about clinched the job.

Carl Boons, new Portland pitcher in the Coast league, had established a record of being with three different clubs in a playing season not yet a week old. He trained with the White Sox, was with Oakland one day and then transferred to the Oregon club.

WRIGLEY'S GUM
SWEETENS THE BREATH

There's No Guesswork in Tribune A. B. C. Circulation