

NOEL'S STRANGE SEASIDE FIND

Motoring early one morning along a coastal road, Noel Raymond, the famous detective, heard a call for help from the nearby beach. Stopping his car, he leaped out, but the rocky cove seemed to be deserted . . . save for a parrot cage. Intrigued, Noel whipped off the cover.



A PARROT WITH A SECRET! WAS IT ITS OWNER HE HAD HEARD CALL OUT? BUT WHERE WAS THE GIRL NOW? ON THE SAND NOEL SAW GIRLISH FOOTPRINTS LEADING TO THE WET, SEAWEED COVERED ROCKS. HE ALSO SAW SOMETHING LYING THERE.... A CRUMPLED BALL OF PAPER.



The cutting stated that all efforts to find the will of Stephen Hammond, an artist who had lived in the Tower Studio, had failed. As Noel finished reading the newspaper report, there came an excited cry and a girl appeared to view.



The girl stated that her brother Jim had asked her to bring Polly to the cove. Stephen Hammond had been their grandfather, and Jim hoped the parrot could help find the will. Looking for her brother, she had fallen on the wet rocks and had cried out.



THE GIRL STATED SHE OWNED A PET'S SHOP IN THE NEARBY TOWN, SO NOEL OFFERED TO DRIVE HER THERE.

THERE WAS A GLINT IN NOEL'S EYES AS HE FOLLOWED THE GIRL INTO THE SHOP. FOR IN HIS MIND WAS A STARTLING SUSPICION. WHAT WAS IT?



THERE'S NO NOTE, SO IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, MR. RAYMOND, I'LL PHONE MY BROTHER AT HIS DIGS.

A FEW MINUTES LATER THE GIRL EMERGED HAPPILY FROM THE OFFICE.



I MANAGED TO GET JIM ON THE PHONE, AND EVERYTHING'S ALL RIGHT, MR. RAYMOND. WE OVERSLEPT - THAT'S WHY HE DIDN'T KEEP HIS APPOINTMENT BUT HE'S COMING ROUND LATER TO COLLECT POLLY.

Two facts had made Noel suspicious. If the girl had really fallen on the wet, seaweed-covered rocks, her frock would have borne traces of damp and dirt, but this was not so. The name on the shop was Teresa Hammond, but the initials on the girl's handbag were not T.H., but J. H. Finally, by listening at the office door Noel had known that the girl had not really telephoned.

THE GIRL THANKED NOEL FOR HIS HELP, BUT THE DETECTIVE SHOWED NO SIGNS OF DEPARTING. THE SUSPICION IN HIS MIND HAD CRYSTALISED INTO CERTAINTY. ACCUSINGLY HE FACED THE GIRL.



I'M NOT GOING UNTIL YOU HAVE TOLD ME THE TRUTH! YOU'RE NOT TERESSA HAMMOND! YOU ARE AN IMPOSTOR!

WHERE IS THE REAL TERESSA? IT WAS SHE I HEARD CALL OUT FROM THE BEACH!



Y-YES. I-I ADMIT IT. MY BROTHER AND I AMBUSHED HER, AND...

BUT BEFORE THE SCARED IMPOSTOR COULD BLURT OUT THE WHOLE STORY, A STEALTHY FIGURE ENTERED THE SHOP, GUN GRIMLY LEVELLED. IT WAS THE GIRL'S BROTHER. HE HAD FOLLOWED NOEL FROM THE LONELY COVE.



HANDS UP! YOU KNOW TOO MUCH!

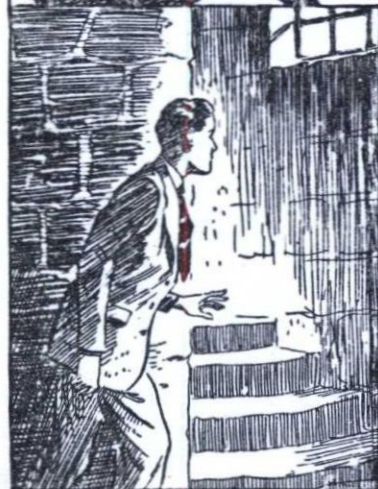
MENACED BY THAT REVOLVER, NOEL WAS HELPLESS. WHILE HER BROTHER KEPT THE DETECTIVE COVERED, THE IMPOSTOR BOUND AND GAGGED HIM.



THE SHOP-DOOR CLOSED AND NOEL WAS ALONE. BUT, THOUGH TIED UP, HE WAS FAR FROM BEING BEATEN. WRIGGLING ACROSS TO WHERE A RUSTY NAIL STUCK OUT OF THE WALL, HE BEGAN TO RUB HIS WRIST BONDS AGAINST IT.



Once his wrists were free, Noel untied his legs and took off his gag. Then, in his car, he sped back along the coastal road. The Tower Studio was on the cliff top near the beach where he had found Polly. Outside stood a car. He guessed it belonged to the impostor and her brother.



ENTERING THE TOWER, NOEL CAUTIOUSLY MOUNTED THE STAIRS. FROM A ROOM ABOVE CAME THE SOUND OF VOICES.



AT LAST THE TRUTH WAS OUT! THE IMPOSTOR AND HER BROTHER, COUSINS OF TERESSA AND JIM WERE OUT TO SECURE THE DEAD ARTIST'S FORTUNE BY SEEING THAT MR HAMMOND'S LAST WILL WAS NEVER PRODUCED. BUT NOEL MEANT TO SEE JUSTICE DONE HE LEAPT INTO THE ROOM.



TAKE THAT, YOU SCOUNDREL!

THE IMPOSTOR'S BROTHER WAS KNOCKED FLYING, AND THE PARROT CAGE HURTTLED FROM HIS HAND. TERESSA AND JIM CRIED OUT IN HORROR, AS THEY SAW IT FALL THROUGH THE WINDOW - TO CRASH ON THE ROCKS FAR BELOW.



POOR POLLY WILL HAVE BEEN KILLED!

AND ITS SECRET WILL HAVE DIED WITH IT!

THAT MEANS THE WILL WILL NEVER BE FOUND! WE WIN, AFTER ALL!



OH, NO YOU DON'T! YOU SEE THAT CAGE WAS - EMPTY! POLLY IS SAFE AND SOUND IN MY CAR!

Noel stated he had taken the precaution of switching over the cages while the impostor had been in the office.

Noel brought up the parrot and released it. After circling around, Polly settled on top of one of the pictures, as its dead master had trained it to do.



PULLING THE PICTURE AWAY FROM THE WALL, NOEL REVEALED A CAVITY, IN WHICH WAS HIDDEN A LEGAL DOCUMENT.

WELL DONE, POLLY!



HERE'S THE MISSING WILL!

THEN WE SHALL INHERIT THE MONEY!

YES--THANKS TO MR RAYMOND!