

'WHERE'S EMILY?'

by Carolyn Wells

WHAT HAS HAPPENED SO FAR
Emily Duane and her friend, Pauline Pennington, disappeared on Emily's wedding rehearsal day. Emily had gone to visit the hospital, but never arrived there. After leaving the Duane home, Pauline also vanished. Later, Pauline's body is found in the ravine, and, close by, Emily's scarf. Rod plans to call in Fleming Stone, noted detective.

Now Go on With the Story.

CHAPTER XX.
"Shut up, Nell," Gibby growled at her for everybody was beginning to feel nervous and upset. They talked a while longer, and then the girls agreed to go to bed. But just then a step was heard on the porch, and Jim Pennington came in through the open French window.

"Forgive me," he said, throwing himself into a chair, "but I can't sleep, and I'm prowling about, and I saw by the lights you were still up, so I came."

"Glad you did," said Rodney, who by common consent had fallen into the position of host. "Come over whenever you like. We're always right here."

"Going to stay on?" Pennington asked, with perfunctory interest.

"Surely," cried Betty. "Emily may turn up any minute, and we may go on with the wedding."

"Oh—of course," and they all realized that Pennington's own tragedy had made him forget or ignore the wedding.

Kind-hearted Betty tried to talk of other things and then Pennington said abruptly, "You know there's to be an inquest."

"How did you know it?" cried Nell, glad to hear more about it.

"Lawlor has just been to see me, and he says that what he learned here, about the fur, you know, makes it advisable. He wanted to see Polly's fur, and I showed it to him. They're almost exactly alike. Well, I hope you folks don't mind. For my part, I'm rather glad to have an inquest. It may help toward finding Emily."

"How?" said Rodney.

"I don't know, but isn't there a chance of bringing out some evidence, or report of any strangers in town, or something like that?"

"You on the motor-bandit theory?"

"I wasn't. I was sure that poor Polly took her own life, for I know there were times when that notion appealed to her. But after the fur story I have vague ideas of bandits or hold-up men who were attracted by Emily's necklace, and when they tried to grab it, Polly tried to help Emily with the result that they pitched Polly over the rail and took Emily off."

"But why abduct her if they had the loot?"

"I don't know, Gibby. My mind goes round in circles. I can't theorize the thing at all. That's why I sort of hoped an inquest otherwise unavailable bit of evidence that might help toward finding Emily."

"It might," Rod said. "At any rate it can do no harm. Shall you go?"

"Oh, I'll have to. And I don't mind. You see the Hildale people are all like one big family. And let me tell you, it'll be some inquest. Whatever our people do, they dress up for it, and they'll make it more like a field day than a police proceeding. They're sorry enough for me, and all that, but they can't help making a Roman holiday. It's their way; they mean no harm."

"Why shouldn't they?" said Nell, secretly intrigued with the prospect. "It can't harm poor Polly and as you say, it may be a help toward finding Emily."

"I wish so, too," said Rodney solemnly. "Do you know any superior detective? I mean one who brings in the goods, not necessarily a superhuman magician."

"The best one I ever heard of—I don't really know any—is Fleming Stone. They say he's the greatest."

"I've heard of him as the top of the heap, too," said Gibby. "But he's almost impossible to get and very expensive."

"I don't mind any expense," Sayre assured him, "and I've some influential friends who could get him for me. I think I've heard his name, but, like you, Jim, I've never had any dealings with live detectives."

Pennington went off home, and after a short further talk the girls went off to bed. Soon Lamb and Gibby went to their rooms, too, but Rodney Sayre camped on the sofa for the few hours left of the night.

"Let 'em laugh," he said to himself. "Emily told me to stay here, and here I stay. Dear little girl, he picked up her photograph from the table. 'Where are you now? Oh, Emily, darling, if you're only alive,' Jim thinks, 'that his affliction is worse than mine—saying that a detective could bring Polly back. Well, maybe it is, but in some ways suspense is almost harder to bear than any certainty. No, it isn't! For with suspense there is always hope.'"

He tumbled onto the sofa, leaving the door ajar and the light burning, and exhausted by the terrible strain, he fell into a sound sleep.

Next morning the others, having also caught a few hours' sleep, felt refreshed for whatever the new day might bring forth. They were not light-hearted, the situation was too serious for that, but they were normally healthy and sound young people, to whom the delicious breakfast set before them was particularly welcome.

Aunt Judy appeared, sad and tearful-eyed, but bravely trying to keep up as well as the rest. They realized that, after Rodney, she was the one Emily loved best of

them all, and they were especially kind and gentle with her.

But kindness and gentleness, nice as they are, cut little ice with Aunt Judy.

"Now, look here," she said to them, "I suppose everybody in Hildale will come here today, with sympathy or a chocolate roll or something to cheer us up. I'll see some of them, but if it's people I don't like, I shall refuse. Nell, I suppose you'll take care of that wooden Indian. Lambie, darling, you made such a success with the Reverend Garner yesterday, I dare say you'll be glad to relieve me of him, and he'll be about the first one here. The neighbors I'll see myself and Pearl will let me know who's approaching in the distance."

The announcement of the inquest startled her.

"What for?" she cried, and they told her about the fur.

Aunt Judy grew very thoughtful. Her black eyes ceased to snap and

her white bobbed hair ceased to shake its curls.

She looked about at the young people, just finishing breakfast.

"Which of you lads has the most sense?" she demanded.

"I have," answered Sayre; "you know it."

"You won't do." She stared hard at Gibby and Lamb and decided on the former.

"Come with me," she beckoned to him, and took him to a small sitting room of her own.

"Pete," she began, after she had closed the door. "It's very bad. Do you see how things are going?"

"In what respect?" he asked, a little bewildered, and also disturbed at her serious air.

"You all told me everything there was to tell about the fur, didn't you?"

"Yes, everything. You know all we know."

"I know more than you know. At least, I see through it as you do not. You are all too young, I sup-

pose, to realize it, but that Lawlor man means very bad business, very bad, indeed."

"Come, Aunt Judy," Pete was permitted the name, "tell me just what you mean."

"This. They were to have no inquest. They were to bury Pauline as having died accidentally. Along comes that fur piece, and turns out to be Emily's. As soon as they learn about it, they call an inquest. Now do you see?"

"Go on," said Pete unsteadily.

"I will go on. They can't explain Emily's presence on the bridge, or her absence afterward. And they think—they think that Emily pushed Polly over, and her fur fell over, and then Emily ran away."

"Aunt Judy, you're crazy."

"I hope to goodness I am!"

The two said no more, for as Aunt Judy had prognosticated, callers came in streams.

The Hildale people were neighborly, and they also had their due

share of human curiosity.

The minister was taken charge of by Lamb, who carried the interview through successfully, although with difficulty repressing a strong impulse to pitch the visitor out of the window.

For the clergyman, without saying it in so many words, implied, or seemed to imply, that a young woman who proposed to edit the marriage ceremony ought reasonably to expect battle, murder, and sudden death to pursue her course.

Burton Lamb tactfully refrained from any reply or comment on these innuendoes, and tried to keep the conversation on the Pennington tragedy rather than their own.

But Mr. Garner kept at it.

(To Be Continued Tomorrow)

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Pienicking at Idlewild Park—Adv

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