

The White Cockatoo

by Mignon G. Eberhart

CHAPTER 3
MYSTERIOUS PROMISE

PERHAPS half an hour later I started to retrace my steps through those confusing corridors to find the dining room. As I stepped outside my room and closed the door behind me I passed a moment.

Directly opposite me and across the shadowy court I could see the lights of the lobby; from its glass-paned door and its window bold rectangles of light spread themselves whitely upon the paving of the court. The wind was steadily rising, murmuring and sighing and creaking windows and shutters, and it waved the dense vines and shrubs in the corners of the court so that they made black-blue shadows which fled anxiously across the white blocks of light.

The courtyard itself was faintly lighter than the shadows, owing to

The lounge was still empty, and the bar had not even a light, but in the dining room adjoining the lounge I caught a glimpse of the bright-eyed little porter apparently doubling as a waiter, for he was hurrying across the room with a steaming tureen of soup in one hand and a napkin properly across his arm.

He looked harassed, but after disposing of the soup, trotted to meet and seat me with an air of alacrity. He brought me the wine list, showed me a written menu which offered no choice, and hurried away.

There were only three people dining.

Directly across from me sat a woman with a kind of war-horse look about her nose, and terrifying wide, black eyebrows; she was dressed in black, silky-looking stuff with quantities of beads and bracelets and brooches, and she looked, in spite of being rather angular in line, a little stuffed as to clothing, as if she had a great many layers of other clothing underneath the black silk.

She was reading the Daily Mail



Curious, I laid my hand on the latch.

the light from the lobby and dining-room windows, as well as to a rather dim and wavering light which was hung above the arched entrance and which, as the wind swayed it, waked more feeling blue shadows into life.

Immediately at my left as I stood facing the lobby was another glassed door, and, idly curious, I moved toward it, glanced through the glass, laid my hand on the latch, and stepped through the door onto a sort of landing which led to a narrow, winding flight of iron steps which descended to the courtyard below.

I don't know why the steps aroused my interest; perhaps I only wanted a breath of fresh air after the chill mustiness of my room. At any rate, I descended a few steps and paused again to view the shadow-ridden court.

JUST below me someone was talking. In the lull of the wind I could hear the voices quite distinctly, although I could see neither of the speakers. Lovachiem, probably, rating a servant, for the lobby was empty, and it sounded like Lovachiem's voice telling someone in crisp English that he'd be damned if he'd let it happen again. The other voice replied that it wouldn't happen again.

"Are you sure?" said the voice I took to be Lovachiem's.

"I'm sure. It's certain. I know exactly where it is."

"Good, then, I leave it to you," Lovachiem paused, and, this man of hybrid nationality, uttered the one Spanish word I knew which was "Mañana."

"Mañana," said the other, and Lovachiem, a dark shadowy bulk, stepped out from the shadows and shrubbery directly below the stairway and walked across the flickering black and blue and white of the court and into the lobby, where he stood at the desk, stroking his white cockatoo. The other speaker had vanished.

Since then I have recalled with some interest that it was a faint distaste of Lovachiem which sent me up the steps again, and through the long winding corridors along which the porter had led me. If I had de-

with a lorgnette and considerable disapproval. I surmised she was English, but I was wrong, for she turned out to be Mrs. Felicia Byng from Omaha, Nebraska, and I might say here that I never did know exactly why she was touring the country or why she had taken it into her head to stop in Armeine. In many respects she remained to the last a woman of mystery.

ACROSS the room sat a priest, a youngish, with a dark brown sweater pulled over his black, tightly buttoned soutane. His claim to distinction appeared to lie in a rather ghastly red beard. His hair was cut like a brush and was of no particular color; thus the sight of his fiery beard was in the nature of a shock. He was partaking of soup through the beard with unpleasant determination, and I shifted my gaze hurriedly back to the wine list in my hand.

But after a moment, simply because there were so few people in the room, my eyes drifted idly to the only other occupied table, where a woman was seated whose back was turned toward me.

Drifted idly but paused with interest, for it was, I saw at once, a very beautiful back. She was wearing a black velvet coat affair which fitted tightly and smoothly, I could see, of course, her slim white neck and her hair, which was brown with gold lights in it and was soft and pleasant-looking.

Below the folds of velvet and the black lace of the gown she was wearing I could see one ankle and foot. Indeed, I could hardly help seeing it, for she wore bright scarlet slippers with silver straps and silver heels. Her ankle was slender, too, with delicate fine lines, and the moment my eyes reached her foot with its nice instep I knew she was an American. It was a beautiful foot, and the slipper was well made.

The erstwhile porter served my soup, and the dinner progressed quietly, with the exception of Mrs. Byng's loud and clattering French. But with the cheese there was an incident which, I think, no one saw but myself.

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What is it that Sundeane sees tomorrow?

NEW AUTO TAGS ORANGE, BLACK

SALEM, April 7.—(AP)—The new automobile license plates for issuance July 1 for the half year, the new license to cost car owners \$5 for that period and \$5 for each succeeding full year, will be orange with black letters, it was announced today.

The state board of control today placed an order for 250,000 pairs with Irwin-Hodson, Portland, the firm which has manufactured plates for the state for the past few years. The new plates were purchased at a figure less than in previous years, less than 8 cents a pair, it was announced. Only one other bid was received.

Tom Thumb Wedding, Friday evening, 7:30, at First Methodist church. Admission: Adults 25c, children 10c.

75c For an 8x10 photo. The Peasleys, opp. Holly Theater.

PRE-EASTER SERVICES CENTRAL PT. CHURCH

Central Point Christian church, under the leadership of the pastor.

Rev. D. E. Millard will conduct special pre-Easter services beginning Sunday and continuing over Easter Sunday. The services will be held each evening at 8 p. m.

One of the special features will be the half-hour song service and singing of old favorite hymns. Special music will also be heard, including male quartet numbers.

The sermons by the pastor will be a series of messages running the full week on "Why I Am a Christian." The public is cordially invited to attend these special meetings.

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By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST



BOUND TO WIN—Safe Momentarily

By EDWIN ALGER



THE NEBBS—Lonesome And Alone

By SOL HESS



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



TRAP FOR PROH. LAW VIOLATORS RULED OUT

WASHINGTON, April 7.—(AP) Attorney-General Cummings sounded the end for the use of entrapments to catch prohibition violators by asserting today that it would stop in the general effort of the new administration to eradicate "injustices" in enforcement of the dry laws.

Pre-Easter bargains. Shoes \$1.45 to \$3.95; hats 25c to \$5.95; dresses \$1.95 to \$5.95; coats and suits \$4.95 to \$10.95. "The Store that Saves You Money" The Band Box & Shoe Box.



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