The White Cockatoo

by Mignon G. Eberhart

SYNOPSIS: Warned by a premonition of ill, James Sundean still stays on in a little hotel in the French town of Armene. He is quartered in a forbidding room, across the court from the body of the hotel. He hears the unsavory Lovschiem, proprietor of the hotel, demand that an unseen stranger "get something" tomorrow. And while at dinner with the three other guests the emphatic Mrs. Felicia Byng, the red-haired priest, and the beautiful American girl, Sundean sees . . .

Chapter 3

THE SWORD CLOCK

I WAS sitting facing the windows, which, in turn, faced the court. They were curtained up to about the height of a man's shoulders.

The outside shutters had not been closed, and I was looking idly at the black, shining window, which reflected, above, the crystal-bedecked chandelier, and thinking that the wind was increasing in violence, for I could hear it rattle the shutters, when I suddenly perceived that I was looking straight into the face of Lovschiem. I could see only the upper half of his face, but it was unmistakable.

The rather disturbing thing was he was staring with curious intensity at the woman with the silver heels. I put down the glass I held, and the motion caught his eyes, which flickered to me and vanished in the same half second.

It had been Lovschiem, in flesh, however: I was sure of that. But if a man wishes to look in the windows of his own hotel I suppose he may do so, unpleasant though his gaze may be.

I loitered a little over some pears, rather hoping the girl with the silver heels would leave first, so I might get a glimpse of her face. But she did not move, even after the porter had cleared the table and disappeared.

I rose at length, reflecting that, after all, it was better to let the vision of beauty remain without running the risk of disillusionment, and that the room was growing colder and colder.

The lounge was deserted, and the parlor was dark. I told the porter to light a fire in my room and serve me coffee and a brandy there.

The night had increased in violence while I sat at dinner, and when at length I opened the door that led into the window-lined corridor of the north wing, the cold rush of air swooped upon me like some frightened creature let loose. I was glad enough to see the porter when he followed me a few moments later.

"DO you think it will burn?" I asked, watching him lay kindling. He glanced dubiously toward the chimney, said something about the north wind, and shrugged and pulled down his mouth in that splendid French gesture which utterly disclaims responsibility for what may occur.

"There aren't many guests at the hotel?" I said.

"No, monsieur. Not at this season. We have now Miss Tally, Madame Byng, Père Robart, and yourself. That is all." He blew vigorously at the small beginning flame. His alert dark face grew scarlet before a flame shot up, and he took a breath and sat back on his heels with his dark eyes now catching lights from the fire and his white apron draped over his knees.

"Miss Tally, she is the beautiful lady in the dining room tonight. The one with the red slippers. Madame Byng, she is the—" he hesitated doubtfully and finally said neatly—"she is the other one."

A shutter banged, and the porter skipped to his feet and across the room, pulling open the long window and letting in a blast of wind that set the flames dancing madly and smoke billowing into the room while he endeavored to fasten the shutter more securely. I judged he did not succeed, for he gave another shrug and left it, fastened the window again, and drew the thick red curtains across it.

MY gaze wandered idly about the room, over the thick worn red carpet, the old chairs with their satin upholstery and what looked to be hand-carved frames, the fancy crystal-bedecked chandelier, the great somber wardrobe, the gilt-framed mirror above the fireplace, the gay French clock on the mantel—not much clock, but elaborately surmounted by the figure of a man on horseback in bronze.

It must have been just about then that I fell into a doze, for the last thing I remember was looking at the figure in bronze, so perfect and complete, with the horse's mane and tail waving, and the rider's hat and cloak swept back, and even his gauntleted hand and the long sword it held quite perfect in detail. I remember thinking how ugly it was as a clock decoration and how large—the sword alone must have been five or six inches long, and the rest of the figure in proportion—and that was all, until I waked suddenly to the fact that the wind was driving smoke down the chimney and into the room, that the shutter was banging furiously, and that I was cramped and chilled.

I rose, yawned, realized I'd been asleep, saw by my watch that it was past twelve, and decided to go to bed. I went to the door, opened it to let the smoke out, and stepped into the corridor, glancing down into the court.

It was a night to bring out the witches. Indeed, you'd have been

A figure in bronze, perfect and complete.

willing to swear they were already out and were whirling and surging madly up and down and through and around the court in a furied witches' Sabbath.

The light under the arch was tossing, black shadows were flying grotesquely; the thick shrubs and vines in the corners had come alive and were flinging themselves violently about, the corridor windows were rattling; the lobby across the court was dark, and not a thread of light was shining through any of the shuttered windows—there were only that small tossing light under the entrance arch and those wild flying shadows.

I wished suddenly that I had chosen a less desolate and wind-swept place. Instinct is always stronger when you are about half asleep: I disliked the old hotel, disliked particularly the witch-ridden courtyard. It was quite suddenly sinister. That seems a fanciful and imaginative word and, God knows, I'm not a fanciful or imaginative man, but it was the only word that was apt. The place was sinister. It threatened.

And then all at once the wind was wailing louder. It was wailing in my ear—no, not wailing, it was sobbing. It was sobbing and saying, inconceivably:

"Let me in. Oh, please. Let me in."

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Sundean, tomorrow, admits a terrified visitor into his gloomy room.

Pyroil Sales Are Increasing Daily According To Hull

Frank Hull and Chriss Wolff, local distributors for Pyroil heat-proof lubricating process announce that the following southern Oregon service stations have Pyroil treated gasoline: Andy's Lubritorium, 715 So. Sixth street, Grants Pass; W. M. Cope, North Riverside; Ever Shady Auto Court, South Pacific highway and Carter's Service Station, Boulevard and Sherman streets, Ashland.

According to the distributors the use of this super-lubricant is increasing by leaps and bounds. Mr. Hull says:

"Pyroil is not a substitute for regular motor oil, but a concentrated super-lubricant to be added to both gas and oil. Pyroil makes motors last longer, gives silky, trouble-free performance and practically abolishes repair bills. Once rubbed into the bearing surfaces under pressure by the motor's action, Pyroil is impervious to any degree of heat possible in a motor and cannot be washed off by wet gasoline like ordinary inflammable mineral oil. Actually penetrates the metal like ink saturates a blotter, filling all pores, cracks and crevices."

Motorists who wish to treat their own gas and oil may purchase Pyroil in cans at any Pyroil dealer, according to Mr. Hull.

The following service stations and garages are prepared to treat oil with Pyroil: W. N. Cope, North Pacific highway; Nip and Sip Service, Central Point; 4 Corners Service station, Midway road; Armstrong Motors, Inc., North Riverside; Sanderson Motor Co., Merritt Swing, mechanic, 207 South Riverside; Ever Shady Auto Park, No. Riverside and Bill Offutt's New Way Garage, Not Riverside.

An instant, accurate credit report may be obtained from the Southern Oregon Credit Bureau while your customer waits.

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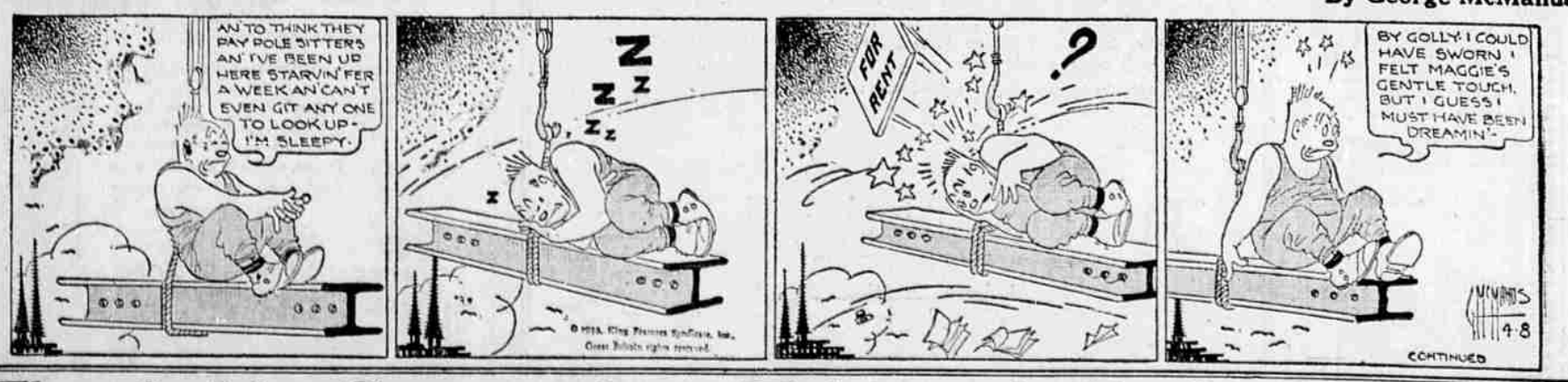

GRUNOW CAMPAIGN TALKED AT MEET

L. E. Larson, of Portland, factory representative of the Grunow Refrigerator company, conducted a southern Oregon district sales meeting at the Palmer Electric store Friday night. An extensive advertising campaign and sales promotion plans were discussed by Mr. Larson.

Members of the sales force from Sam Jordan's store in Ashland, and salesmen from the Brownie Radio shop at Grants Pass were present to hear interesting facts about the new Grunow refrigerators.

Palmers have a display of Grunows showing a range of sizes to meet the needs of every household from the smallest to the largest.

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

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