

# The White Cockatoo

by Mignon G. Eberhart

**SYNOPSIS:** Jim Sundeen waits for the police to come and arrest him for a murder he did not commit—in a half-deserted hotel in Southern France. Circumstances point to the guilt of an attractive American girl, Sue Tally, who only a short time before has asked refuge from an abductor in Sundeen's room, but who would not permit him to search for her pursuer. She handed, in passing, a sharp sword in the hands of a Sardinian's room. Sundeen has found the sword in the breast of the murdered man. His father Robert is at ease in praying over the corpse Sue has fled and Sundeen tries to construct a story that will not incriminate her. Then, across the court, he sees a face he believes to be hers.

## Chapter 9 THE SHOT

It was Sue Tally. It was not Sue Tally. It was Sue Tally. I told myself that I was mistaken. I told myself that the light upon it had been too brief, too sudden and swift a flash to permit me to recognize any face. But I stared and stared at that unshuttered window and wondered what was back of those winking blank panes, and that strange, haunting resemblance to Sue Tally's face would not leave me.

Suddenly I was conscious that Lovschlem had roared from his distraction sufficiently to note my gaze and follow it. I had the impression he had overlooked some pressing and urgent aspect of affairs. This impression was confirmed when he caught his breath sharply, and a quick glance at me, and said suddenly:

"But I must go. There are things—Grethe will want—you and Father Robert can stay with the—with this." His eyes indicated the thing at our feet.

"Wait," I said. "What room is that across there? What number is it? The one with the shutters open?" His eyes were veiled and yet intensely aware of me and my question.

"You mean across the court there? That is about 24 or 35. Why?" Not 18, then. "Is it unoccupied?" "Yes." He replied directly, without a shadow of hesitation. "I saw a face just now in the window."

"No, no. You are mistaken. There is no one there."

"There certainly was a face there, Lovschlem."

It seemed to me he looked faintly relieved at the implication that did not know the face. But he said a word or two to the priest, who did not look around or reply, and waddled hurriedly away. At the end of the passage he met the little porter and stopped for a few words with him before he disappeared around the corner, and the porter hurried toward us.

Madame had called him, the porter said breathlessly, and he was to remain with us while Monsieur went to her assistance.

Turning into my room, I threw my coat over my shoulders and took a flashlight from my bag. The little porter watched me anxiously, and I said as I returned to the corridor: "I'm going to look about the court. Back in a moment."

He did not seem reassured, but, of course, had nothing to say. Thus I closed the door, saw the porter's bright eyes watching it and what he could see of me, stepped out of their range of vision, and snapped the button on my flashlight. It made a darting circle of light on the stone floor of the landing.

There were no signs of a struggle, but I could have expected none. There were no muddy footprints, for there was no mud; everything in Armeue was dry and cold and wind-swept. There were no cigar ashes. There were no coat buttons. There was nothing but a dark blotch, quite small, where the door-mat had huddled.

I bent close to the worn stone and looked and looked, turning my flashlight here and there, and eventually I did discover a small red piece of what looked like hard rubber or very hard wax. It was rough and irregularly semicircular and about the size of a half-dollar. It bore no faint resemblance to any kind of clue. I put it in my pocket merely because it was the only thing except the dark patch on the stone and a dry brown leaf that the landing held.

It was just at that second that there was a sudden lull in the wind; everything, shadows and shrubbery and rattling windows, fell into dead quiet, and I heard an unguarded step on the stairway below me.

It wasn't any sound but a step. I knew that perfectly, and I daresay that if the wind had not lulled just at that instant I should not be alive now. But I heard it and moved to one side in order to look over the curve of the railing. And at that very instant there were two sharp cracks of a revolver, my flashlight spun out of my hand and thudded somewhere below, the wind swooped down upon the courtyard with a crash, and every light in the hotel went out.

My hand tingled but wasn't hurt. There was no sound but the hurling of the wind, and I found myself running down the stairway, holding to the railing. There is no excuse for it, but that is what I did.

I encountered nothing on the stairway. If it was Lovschlem who had shot at me—and I thought it possible—he would probably either follow me to finish the job or seek to reenter the hotel himself.

He certainly was not apt to reenter the hotel by way of the winding stairway and the corridor where the priest and the porter waited; if I followed the wall cautiously past the great iron gate below the entrance arch and then around the corner, opposite, I might catch him at the door of the lobby.

By this time I had cooled a trifle, and my progress was slower and more careful, and I wished I had some kind of weapon. Lovschlem was fat, however, and out of condition. If I could get him before he had time to use his revolver—again something brushed my hand. This time it was not a shrub. It was a rough fabric and an arm, and it moved quickly away, and I buried myself in its direction, tackling low as in football.

I caught only the flying end of some kind of garment which wrenched itself of my clutch, my knees scraped the pavement, and there were three flashes of light from somewhere off at my left and three revolver shots that spat viciously through the tumult. Vaguely I thought it was lucky I was flat on the pavement and waited. There were no more shots, and the wind shrieked, and it was black as pitch everywhere.

I wished I had had the good sense to retreat before it was too late, and got cautiously on my knees, then swiftly to my feet and ran to my right a few steps. The sound made by the wind covered my own foot steps, but it also covered the sound of any movement he had made. Cautiously, straining my ears to hear, I edged toward the wall of the north wing, not, however, toward the corner of the stairway. That, I thought, was where he would expect me to go; it would be natural for me to attempt to escape by the way in which I had entered the courtyard—an entrance which, I realized rather chillingly, had been entirely too precipitate. When someone starts shooting at you in the dark and you have no weapon at all, you can't help wishing vehemently that you were elsewhere.

Against the wall, with some kind of small tree in a tub at one side of me, I waited. If he approached from the side of the shrub I would hear him or feel him and have some warning; then, since you'd rather take a chance than stand still and be shot, I could take him perhaps unexpectedly and have a better chance in a fight.

Presently I began to work quietly toward the door to the lobby. The entrance gates were locked, Sue had said; the light shined above the door above, and the only place left was the lobby door.

I encountered no one and heard nothing but the wind. And I had not more than arrived at the lobby door when the lights suddenly flashed up; the light away above the entrance, throwing the court into shadows and empty white spaces again; the light from my door above; and now a light in the lobby beside me.

I stepped aside from the door into the shadow and waited again. There was nothing to be seen but the shadows and the bending shrubs and trees in the courtyard.

Defeated and angry, I opened the lobby door. Madame, her red hair shining under the dead light, looked up at me, a quick flash in her green eyes.

"Your husband just came in by this door," I said. "Where is he?" "No one entered by that door," she replied crisply. The cockatoo chattered, and she added: "Hush, Puccel."

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Tomorrow, Sue stares with frightened eyes at the murdered man.

## NEXT YEAR G. A. A. OFFICERS ELECTED

At a meeting of the Girls' Athletic

association, at Medford high school, April 10, officers for next year were elected and further plans were made for Play Day, April 22, to be held at Grants Pass.

The newly elected officers were: president, Leda O'Neil; vice president, Anna Scheel; secretary, Patricia Young; treasurer, Ruth D'Albini; publicity manager, Margaret Ward; sports manager, Lucille Knips; fell leader, LaMerle Beck.

Among plans discussed for the Play Day, were the number to attend, and the number of cars available. Time and place, for leaving, to journey to Grants Pass has not been definitely settled. A short meeting is scheduled for the near future, where these plans will be made.

## LEWIS THANOS LANDS TWO LARGE SALMON

Lewis Thanos, 13-year-old Medford youth, was reported today by his

brother to have caught two large salmon yesterday at Savage Rapids dam. One weighed 20 pounds, and the other 18, he stated. Pete Toskan, also of Medford, reported catching his second fish of the season yesterday.

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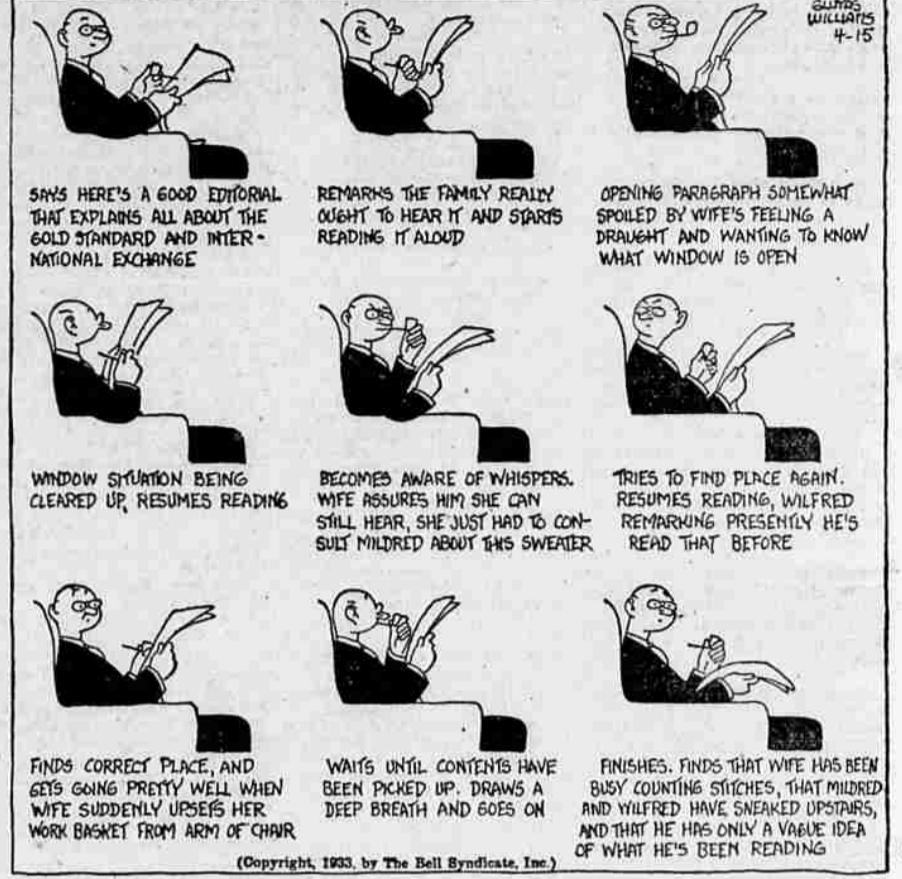
## S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



## THE FAMILY ALBUM—READING ALOUD

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



## TAILSPIN TOMMY—Skeeter's Laugh May Be Prematur!

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST



## BOUND TO WIN—Phineas Phlip Comes Clean!

By EDWIN ALGER



## THE NEBBS—A Thing Of Serenity

By SOL HESS



## Local Pastor Builds Locomotive Model

A toy-size working model of a Baltimore & Ohio express passenger locomotive, made by Father W. J. Meagher, of the Sacred Heart Hospital, attracted admiring young window-gazers Saturday to Hubbard's store, where the train engine is displayed.

More than 900 hours were spent by Father Meagher in completing the locomotive which measures three feet, eight and one-half inches in length, and weighs 52 pounds. Mechanically perfect, the dwarf engine runs in a manner to be envied by the original.

Ladies of Sacred Heart church cordially invite the women of this community to Easter Monday luncheon at Parish Hall, one o'clock. Price 35c.

## BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



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