

The White Cockatoo

by Mignon G. Eberhart

SYNOPSIS: One moment merely an engineer on a holiday during in his room Jim Sundeau next finds himself accused of murder. It begins with a plea from Sue Tally for help against an unseen saboteur. As she for the key of Sue's room, and finds a body in the hall of the almost empty French hotel. Seeing a priest crawling over the body Sundeau follows the lead of the knobless manager of the hotel and begins a search of his own. His flashlight is shot from his hand, he plunges down a stair into the dark court as the hotel lights wink out. He struggles against his assailant in the blackness and three more shots are fired at him. Then the lights go on, the court is empty.

Chapter Ten SUE'S FRIGHT

EXCEPT for the witches and the wind and myself, the courtyard was empty. I crossed it again and had the good sense to find and put the discoverable pieces of my flashlight into my pocket against the search the police would make, before I ascended the little from stairway and stepped again into the corridor.

The priest had gone, and the little porter wore an anxious look, and Sue Tally was standing there beside him.



"Go bring wood," I said.

She looked at me, and I closed the door and shut out some of the wind, and she said, "Oh, in a gasping way. She looked stricken. The toe of her scarlet slipper was near the dead man's hand, and I got the impression that she had been leaning over him.

I said to the porter: "Where is father Robert?"

"I don't know. He went away. As soon as you left us he went away too."

"You were alone here?"

"Yes." His wiry little shoulders moved in a kind of shudder, and I believed him, although that left the porter and the priest each to his own devices at a time when I was pursuing and being pursued in the courtyard below.

I paused to consider whether the priest or the porter could have got by way of the corridor into the courtyard in time to discover me still on the landing with my flashlight and fired at me, and decided that neither of the two had had time to do so. Still, there it was: the priest or the porter or Lovschlem; I inclined toward Lovschlem.

The porter repeated: "But yes, monsieur. Until Miss Tally arrived."

There were things I wanted to ask Miss Tally. I said to the porter: "What was the matter with the lights?"

HE shrugged and spread out his hands. "I do not know. It is very bad here without lights. There was one that moved, I think. I think he moved—but it is only that I have fear." Sue Tally caught her breath, and the little porter added quickly with an anxious glance at her: "There was only the wind. Me, I am not afraid."

"Go and—" And what I sought for an excuse. "Go and bring some wood, please. The fire in my room is down. The police will soon be here and will question us all."

He gave me a sharp and rather dubious look but went.

"Do you know this man?" I asked Sue across the thing on the floor.

"To the best of my belief," she said slowly and so gravely that at the moment I did not note the curious wording of her reply, "I have never seen him before."

"Then he wasn't the man who—abducted you?"

"I don't know," she said. "I don't know. How could I know? I didn't see him."

She was white and tired and frightened and lovely. I turned my eyes resolutely away from her and said:

"Why did you leave my room? Why didn't you wait?"

"I was—afraid," she said in a small voice. "When you left, I was afraid. I followed you almost at once, thinking to meet you in the corridor. But when I reached my room the key was in the door. I can't think why I was so stupid—it still seems that I left it on the key board."

"How long did you wait?" I asked, despising myself and staring through the shadows at the lighted lobby.

"Only a moment or two,"

"Long enough for me to reach the lobby?"

"Oh, no," she said. "As a matter of fact, I was counting. I thought I would count up to three hundred, and I could begin to expect you back again. But I got to my first hundred, and the wind was rattling things, and—I ran out and along the corridor." Her voice broke, and she added more steadily: "Silly of me. To be so absurdly afraid. I'm not as a rule."

TERRIBLY I wanted to believe her. But something inside me kept saying coldly: Circumstantial. "Counting" and "afraid." Too circumstantial by far. And, anyway, you saw her leave your room. You saw her leave with your own eyes, and it had been far longer than she says.

There were other things I had to ask, but I looked at her, and our eyes met, and I was silent again with all my doubts and half-certainties and fears crowding and seething inside me.

My hand went out toward her, and with a kind of quiet directness that made the gesture the most natural thing in the world, she slipped her own in it, and I loathed myself for doubting her, and then the courtyard was alive with short-caped figures and stiff little caps, all so active that there seemed many more than there actually were, and the policemen were tumbling up the winding stairs.

Their explanation of the body was brief, and I could not see it for the blue capes. It was only a few moments before the Lovschlems and two of the police followed us into the light and comparative warmth of my room where we stood in an agitated group.

From the first I was at a disadvantage owing to my inability to recall any but a word or two in the French language. It was a disadvantage which Madam Grethe took the fullest opportunity; or at least, so I've always suspected.

That night the police let me almost alone beyond a few painstaking questions as to how and when I had found the murdered man.

The queries were made by a slender young man whose eyes were remarkably bright and quick, and who spoke very slow and distinct and remarkable idiomatic English to me and then relayed my replies to an older man with a gray imperial and mustache, who was the commissaire de police and in charge of the affair, and who was unnecessarily pompous about it.

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Williams Creek

WILLIAMS CREEK, April 17.—(Sp.)—Walter Jones, who lives on the McCallister place on the east fork of Williams creek, has been in poor health and unable to work for more than a month.

Mrs. W. H. Lemmon and Mrs. John Mullen were calling at the Mills home Wednesday.

Mr. and Mrs. George Lovelace accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Don Beams and Mr. and Mrs. Charles McMerick, who have been visiting them, as far as Grants Pass Thursday.

Fred Kincaid cut and delivered a tier of wood to Mrs. Lee Saturday.

Three new pupils entered school last week, Lucile, Loraine and Lois Britson. They are in Mrs. Varner's room. Also Charles Rush, 8th grade, and Milan Rush, 3rd grade, entered recently.

Mr. Frank Bryan's son is visiting here.

Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Davidson visited at the Sorels home Tuesday evening.

Cave Camps are becoming quite popular again since the warm days are coming on. Many cars are going up every Sunday.

Dick Gibson has had to close down his mill for a few days while the main saw is being repaired.

Charles Moomaw plowed for Leo Peckham Saturday, preparing ground for setting out Kale for chicken feed.

Mrs. Miller has sold several pairs of rabbits to the boys of the neighborhood.

Frank Rose, who has been working for the Gibson mill for several weeks, is taking advantage of its closing for a short time to finish his bungalow. He is building in Grants Pass. There will be five rooms and bath.

Mr. and Mrs. H. L. Payne were business visitors in Grants Pass Saturday.

Cleo Swearingen, who has been employed in Grants Pass for several months, is now at home.

There was an egg hunt for the little folks at the Brethern Sunday school Easter.

8x10 Photo for 75c. The Peaseley, opp. Holly Theater.

S'MATTER POP—

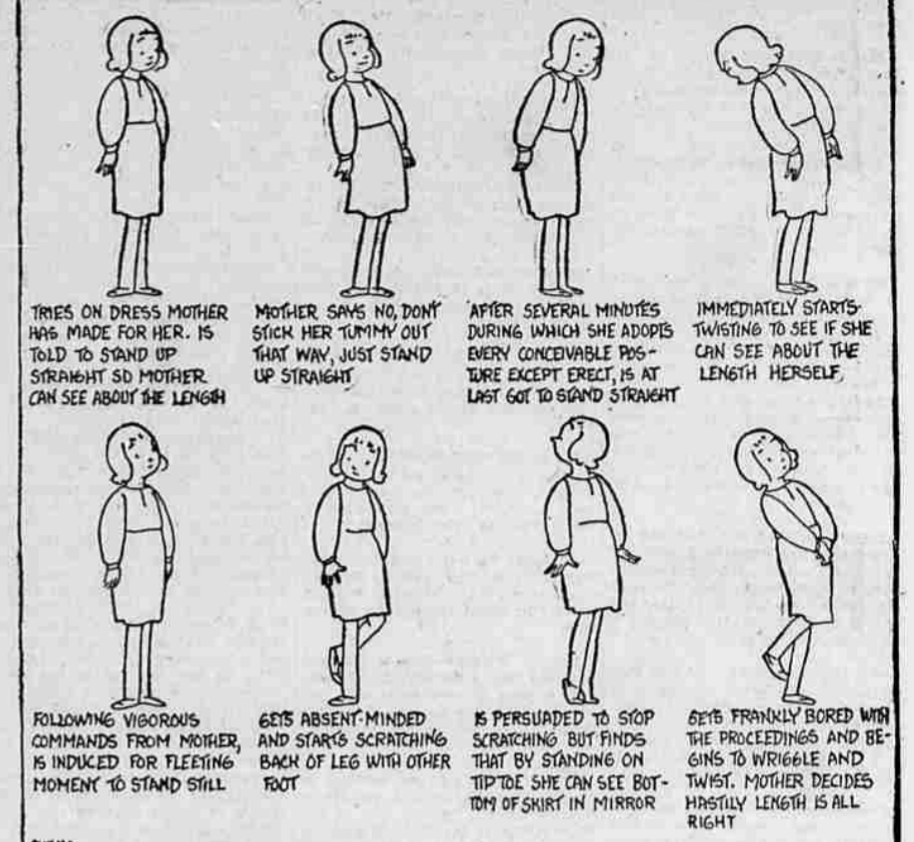
By C. M. PAYNE



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SNAPSHOTS OF A GIRL TRYING ON A DRESS

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



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TAILSPIN TOMMY—The Unseen Menace

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST



BOUND TO WIN—More From Phineas Phlip

By EDWIN ALGER



THE NEBBS—A Thing Of Serenity

By SOL HESS



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



A WORLD OF FLAVOR
WRIGLEY'S
KEPT RIGHT IN CELLOPHANE

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