

The White Cockatoo

by Mignon G. Eberhart

Synopsis: There are half a dozen persons who might have murdered the mysterious stranger: Lovschiem, Madame Grethe, Lovschiem, Sue Tally, Father Robert, even Harcel, the porter of the hotel, in which this strange crew is gathered. All Jim Sundean knows is that he didn't commit the murder himself—just he has been arrested for it. Sundean also knows that he didn't much like to find Sue and a new arrival talking together just before the police arrived.

Chapter 14 A VISITOR COMES

AND I wanted first of all a lawyer; I felt rather cold as I suddenly recalled that in France there is no writ of habeas corpus. It is true that I was an American citizen, a fact clearly set forth in my passport, but this had not appeared to relieve the situation in the least.

It didn't seem at all legal that they should simply throw me into jail and keep me there, but everything I had ever heard about the remarkable freedom of the French police in such matters returned to my memory, and I began to feel a degree of anxiety which, I was to discover, was quite justifiable.

Night comes early in the winter at Armeuse, and the room was dark, and no one had appeared to light it, and I was smoking my last cigarette and wishing I had the pompous old commissaire by the beard when I heard footsteps and voices and a key turning in the lock. The cold, dark little room was flooded with light, and a visitor, a man, was ushered in to see me.

I got to my feet and was blinking in the unexpected light as he instigated something that rattled gently into the hand of the man who had opened the door. Then my visitor turned, and I saw the man who had arrived at the hotel during the afternoon.

He said briskly: "I'm sorry to see you here, Mr. Sundean. My name is Lorn—David Lorn." He paused and then added: "Miss Tally asked me to see you."

His words were neither promising nor exactly explanatory; still, things looked suddenly better. I was not, after all, entirely without a friend.

"Sit down!"

He drew up the small straight chair, and I sat down on the cot. He put his hat on the floor, opened his coat, and drew out no larger than it had been in the afternoon, I'm bound to admit that the sight of his countenance was very welcome. He handed me the paper, and it was a note from Sue Tally. It was brief but nice.

She had written: "Your being thrust into jail is absurd and intolerable. This is Mr. Lorn. He knows the whole affair and thinks he can do something about it."

She had written hurriedly and, I thought, agitatedly, and her signature was a spirited S. Tally.

"Miss Tally is very good," I said. I put the note in my pocket.

He cleared his throat and looked at the floor by my feet.

"She thinks you didn't do this," "She's right," I said with some heat.

"In fact," he went on rather cautiously, "after hearing her story of the whole affair, I am inclined to agree with her. At least," he continued before I could speak, "there appear to be a number of rather interesting points of which she has told me which may—mind, I only say may—prove to be evidence."

"Evidence?"

"Evidence in your favor, I mean to say. However, you—er—I thought he looked directly at me and he said unexpectedly: "It's just as well to start with a clean slate, however. I take it you really didn't murder the man."

"You're damned right, I didn't murder him. I never even saw him before."

"Never mind, never mind. I didn't think so. Sit down, Mr. Sundean, sit down." He looked at me doubtfully. "There, now, that's better, Mr. Sundean. Let's be calm about this. First, however, do you feel like—er—accepting my help?"

"Am I in a position to refuse help?"

He smiled faintly.

"First, Mr. Sundean, you told the police that there were five revolver shots last night while you were in the court with some person whom you did not see?"

"Yes, five."

"H'm. Then I may be right in my surmise. It's a possibility at least."

"What is a possibility?"

"That the other revolver shot, the sixth—"

"But there was no sixth; there were only five."

"He fired twice at your flashlight, three times over your head. You still remained in the courtyard—"

"I couldn't get away," I said.

"Exactly. Therefore it is reasonable to suppose that if the sixth shot had still remained in his revolver he would have again tried to—er—shoot you."

"I don't see," I said, "that that has anything to do with getting me out of here. The man was murdered by stabbing. Look here, perhaps you can tell me just why I'm here. What's this new evidence Lovschiem was so afraid he'd tell me about?"

"H'm. Well, it's rather bad, Mr. Sundean. But still not at all convincing. There's the matter of the clock sword being from your room; they are divided in opinion as to the moment regarding your seemingly frank bringing the thing to their attention. At the moment I fear the weight of opinion is that it was only a clever ruse on your part."

"How do you know that?"

"I've been talking to the officer in charge. I took the liberty of telling him, Mr. Sundean, that I was your legal representative. And owing to a matter which I brought before him he was inclined to talk to me at some length."

"That's very good of you," I said warmly.

"Then there's your shattered flashlight."

"But it was shot out of my hand."

"Yes, of course. But unfortunately it is so completely shattered that it is difficult to tell just what did happen to it. Pieces were found just below the landing on which there was a patch of blood from the murdered man; those pieces might be taken to mean that you simply dropped your flashlight in a struggle with him."

"But that's—why, that's no evidence."

"The police are apt to take a different view from what we expect. But there are two other things, Mr. Sundean. There's a matter of a soiled towel; a towel which bears traces of blood. They say you dried your hands on it."

"Why, of course, I washed my hands! Remember, I stumbled and went down on the body. And then when I discovered what it was I dragged him through the door and into the corridor."

"That's what you say."

"It's the truth."

"Oh, certainly, Mr. Sundean. But there's the other way of looking at it. And the conclusive thing to their mind is this: Letters were found among your things, as well as various articles of clothing and papers, that proved you have been in Russia, near and in Moscow for the last two years. Yet your arrival bulletin, on file here with the police, makes no mention at all of Moscow. In it you claim your home is in New York. Is your home New York?"

"Yes. That is, no. That is—I have no home, exactly. New York does as well as any place. And I've been on a construction job in Russia. I'm an engineer."

"So Miss Tally told me," he said. He was at last looking directly at me, but I could not measure the look in his dull deep-set eyes. He added expressionlessly: "Perhaps I'd better tell you that I cannot possibly help you unless you give me your confidence."

"Hang it, man, I am telling the truth. I've told the truth all along. There was no reason not to. I've been in Moscow, certainly, but what of it? Many people have been in Moscow; the city's full of people."

"Well, you see," said Lorn slowly. "The murdered man—they have reason to think that he's a Russian, too."

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Mr. Lorn tomorrow, injects a startling fact into the sinister tangle.

PLENTY SUNSHINE DERBY DAY HOPE

LOUISVILLE, Ky., April 21.—(AP)—Sunshine, and a lot of it, is the

principal hope of trainers conditioning nominees for the \$50,000 added Kentucky derby to be raced at Churchill Downs May 6. Muddy tracks have been the tracks at both Louisville and Lexington for more than a week.

Col. E. R. Bradley, whose entry of Boilermaker and Brokers Tip may produce another surprise victory for the three-time derby winner, will not start in the prospect purse at Lexington Saturday unless the track is good. Bradley's horses, as yet untraced this spring, are working out at his Idle Hour farm near Lexington.

C. C. Van Meter says he has about decided to drop the derby from the stake engagements of his Red Whisk. This nominee has shown a dislike for mud, and the continued bad track at Lexington has prevented his conditioning for the mile and a quarter journey.

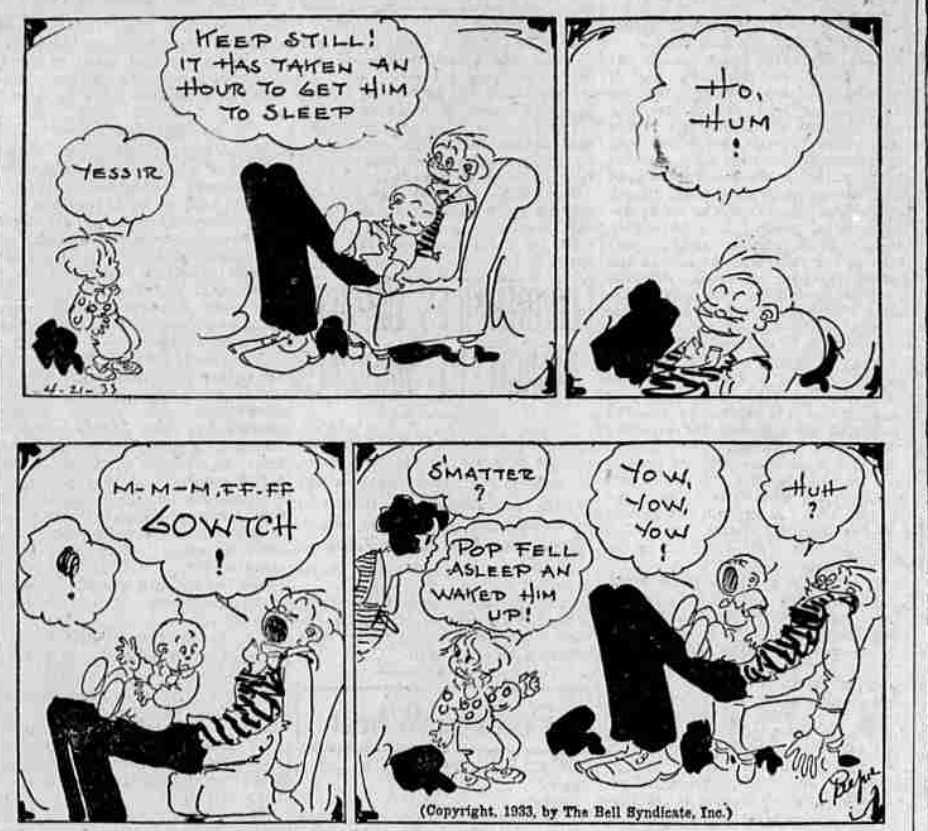
MRS. JUDD SANE SAY ALIENISTS

FLORENCE, Ariz., April 21.—(AP)—With her life at stake, 28-year-old Winnie Ruth Judd, blonde confessed

slayer of Agnes LeRoy and Hedvig Samuelson, heard three alienists testify today for the state they believe she is sane, knows she is under death sentence and knows why.

S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



DIFFICULT DECISIONS

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



TAILSPIN TOMMY—Jose Hits A Snag!

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST



BOUND TO WIN—The Farewell Note

By EDWIN ALGER



THE NEBBS—What Will The Harvest Be?

By SOL HESS



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



FIRST DOG RACES IN OREGON SOON

PORTLAND, Ore., April 21.—(AP)—The first dog racing meet under the new Oregon law permitting and regulating horse and dog racing will be held here from May 23 to June 3. A second meeting will be held June 10 to July 1.

Salem Will Seek Funds For Dock

SALEM, Ore., April 21.—(AP)—Application for a \$85,000 loan for construction of a municipal dock here will be sent to the reconstruction finance corporation tomorrow. The plan was outlined as self-liquidating over a 25-year period.

The number of motor vehicles used for commercial purposes in France has increased 71% in six years.

There's No Guesswork in Tribune A. B. C. Circulation