

# The White Cockatoo

by Mignon G. Eberhart

**SYNOPSIS:** Can it be that the man who murdered the illusionist in the hotel corridor, the man who shot the times at Jim Sundeau, and the man who tried to abduct Sue Tally are the same? Sue, Sundeau and David Lorn, a detective, pursue the problem. They agree that behind it all is a plot to obtain the token by means of which Sue is to prove her identity to her brother, whom she has not seen for years, and thus to share with him an immense fortune. In any case, Sue is in danger—and Sundeau wishes to help her.

## Chapter 21 STUBBORN SUE

I STARTED toward Sue: It was a ghastly suggestion she'd put into words. But Lorn intercepted me. "Oh, don't think of danger, Miss Tally," he said easily. "The token protects you so long as they don't discover it."  
She looked faintly less rigid under the easy assurance of his words. But I was thinking: abduction, search, threat, unspeakable torture, even. And she was like a rock in her determination not to go to her brother.  
"Can't you cable something to Francis to bring him here sooner?" I suggested.  
"No," cried Sue spiritedly. "I won't beg."  
"Nonsense," I said. "This is too serious for petty pride."  
"Petty pride!" She was on her feet again, her eyes flashing dangerously.  
"Come, come, Miss Tally," murmured Lorn quietly. "We understand your position. But I'll cable to Mr. Tally."  
"I won't have it!"  
"Then I'll do it myself," I said grimly, and meant it, though I have the average man's dislike for meddling in someone else's affairs.  
"You won't," said Sue, sitting down again.  
"Then you'll tell the police about it and get their permission to leave—"

schlem and his wife know it. Marcel knows it. But otherwise it is supposed to be kept a secret."  
I remembered her words at once. "And you said the man who followed you last night knew the way into the hotel? That limits it further, then, if the way is supposed to be kept a secret. If we can discover just who knows that way—providing of course it has actually been kept a secret—" Sue nodded vigorously, though I thought it unlikely—"then among those people must be—"  
I checked myself, as I was getting nowhere, and Lorn said a little maliciously: "Must be whom, Mr. Sundeau? The murderer or the murdered man?"  
"That depends on the identity of the murdered man," I said rather glumly. "At any rate, it proves that the man who tried to abduct Miss Tally had some connection with the hotel—or with the Lovschlems. The fact that, after driving about for so long a time, he finally brought her back to the immediate vicinity of the hotel indicates that, too."  
Lorn nodded. "Possibly," he said. "Then," I said, "there's the car she was carried off in. If the murdered man was her abductor, then the car must be standing about near the hotel."  
"True," said Lorn, giving me a faintly respectful look. "I'll see what I can find out about that. Fortunately, as I said, the police here are inclined to be friendly to me. I wonder how soon we'll know the exact poison: we can't consider its hypothetical relation to the few facts we have, until we know what the poison was, how it might be administered, and when. However, the abductor may have had accomplices."

"THERE was only one man," said Sue with a small shudder. I glanced at her white face and said quickly:  
"Well, there seem to be several things that will bear investigation. I want to know, first, a-out this business of the dagger; who took it off the dead man and washed it and then put it back on the clock?"  
"Then I want to know why the lights went out just as they did while I was in the court. It was a most opportune accident—if accident it was—for the man in the court with me; otherwise I should certainly have caught a glimpse of him."  
"My only surmise about that is that, if it was Lovschlem in the court, then Madame Lovschlem could easily have pulled the main switch. She might have been watching the affair and have come to her husband's assistance, in that way. Where were you, Miss Tally, when the lights in the hotel went out?"  
"I was still in my room," she said at once.  
"That was," I asked, hating myself but remembering too vividly the face in the third-floor window, "your own room—nineteen? On this floor?"  
"Why, yes, of course," she said. "Do you mind if I ask how you knew of the murder?"  
"Not at all. I was opening my window; I could not see through the shutters, and I unchained one in order to glance out into the court. I saw light streaming from your room and several figures—yours, I thought, and Marcel's—and I could see Father Robart leading as if he were kneeling."  
"It was clear, of course, that something unusual had happened, and I was—curious, I suppose. I felt apprehensive and alarmed and couldn't possibly have gone to sleep without knowing. Finally I closed the shutter and started to dress again. While I was dressing the light in my room went out."  
"That has happened before, so I just waited till it came on again and thought nothing of it. As soon as I got my coat on I came out into the corridor and hurried along it and into the north corridor and saw Marcel. You and the priest weren't there any more. Marcel told me what had happened, and then you came."  
"You met no one in the corridors?"  
"No," she said promptly. "No one."  
I couldn't say: But I saw you looking from a third-floor window and you looked white and terrible. I couldn't say: Why was your story about the key so strangely apt? I couldn't say: Why did you replace the dagger? I couldn't say: Why, oh, why didn't you tell me the truth about the time when you left my room?"

"The terrible tangle takes a new form, tomorrow."

"But there's no one else in the hotel," said Lorn.  
"No," agreed Sue at once. "Except the servants, and they couldn't be the offenders—Marcel is too loyal, Marianne too honest, and the cook has no brains at all and besides is a shocking coward."  
"Well," said Lorn, "there's the priest and Mrs. Byng."  
"And do you seriously suspect either of them?" asked Sue scornfully. "No—it there actually is a conspiracy, as you call it—against me, it comes from outside the hotel."  
"But ways and means?" hinted Lorn dryly.  
"Pouf! There are plenty of ways and means. People could easily get in and out of the place, and without being seen. It stands open all day. It's practically deserted in the winter. And it's a great rambling affair with a hundred hiding places."  
"Do you know any of them?" asked Lorn sharply.  
SHE looked at him in a perplexed way.  
"Oh, I see," she said after a moment. "You mean really secret hiding places. Isn't that a little absurd, Mr. Lorn?"  
"Perhaps," he said. "Still—it's a very old place, you know."  
"You are sure it was a man who shot at you in the courtyard, Mr. Sundeau?" asked the detective.  
"Why, yes, of course. That is, well—no, I didn't actually see him, and I suppose a woman can fire a revolver as easily as a man. But I felt that it was a man."  
Sue said quickly: "You've forgotten, Mr. Sundeau. I told you there is a way into the hotel after the doors and gates have been locked for the night. I know it. Lov-

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