



Murder in Plain Sight

by GERALD BROWN
W.N.U. FEATURES



Duke McCale, private detective, is engaged by wealthy old Miss Bigelow to guard the presents for her niece's wedding. McCale accepts, only because he senses that Miss Bigelow is afraid of something more serious than a possible theft. McCale sets his assistant, Rocky Bjorkland, and his secretary, Ann Mariot, to hunting up back ground data on the members of the families involved in the wedding. Later McCale inspects the rich presents. One is a deed to a modernistic mansion. A tall, beautiful blonde woman playing the piano intrigues his interest. Two other women and a man appear in the room. They are obviously members of the family, appearing aristocratic and self-satisfied.

It over with. He started to talk, almost blurred out, "You're in some trouble, Miss Bigelow. You need help. You do. You came to me this morning with it written all over your face. You're afraid of something—something that has nothing to do with wedding gifts." He made a gesture as if he were waving them away. "You are afraid. I know." "I suppose you do." But though her hand trembled, her eyes were vacant. "Tell me what it is. Give me your confidence. If you want my help, I must have it. What do you fear? Who is making you afraid?"

now and then raises the hair on my head—" "Who called you in?" "Family." To himself he continued, "Damn. This fellow is too inquisitive." Suddenly McCale caught a glimpse of something—something ugly behind that half-fellow attitude, that mantle of jauntiness—something he did not like. "Not Sybil!" Christopher prodded. "Not darling Sybil, surely."

McCale was saved from making a reply by a peal of light laughter outside the room. A door banged somewhere. There was another ripple of merriment mingled with a deeper one, running feet on the stairs, and Veronica ran into the room, followed by a man.

"Now I've done it," he cursed to himself, for she threw him a sharp, half-angry glance, and got up. He stumbled to his feet, blind with anger at himself, but she was smiling at two people who were entering the room.

The girl was all gold. Her skin tones were coffee and cream, in the liquid sense of a Laurencin portrait. She was not beautiful, but her face had a depth and a glow that was curiously warming. That was it. She was warm and golden, and you knew at once that she was intelligent and nice, as well as decorative. Her hair was long, naturally curly, and of a burnished bronze



She didn't resent his standing there as she played.

color. Her head was set on a perfectly proportioned body. Dressed as she was in shades of beige and brown, simply and in beautiful taste, she was at once quietly charming, assured, thoroughbred.

"Veronica, dear," Miss Bigelow touched her, kissed her. There was in her voice a note of passionate concern, of pride—of relief.

Adelaide Bigelow introduced the golden girl in the doorway to McCale and he was surprised at the creature's throaty, mellow voice. It lacked the superficiality of the debutante drawl. But wasn't there something a trifle nervy, a bit disquieting, about the edges of that voice? There was.

She pecked at her aunt, smiled at McCale, made a few quick, nervous laughing jibes at her family, and said in that modulated, too-well-controlled tone, "Anything new come? Present, I mean. Anything exciting, about the edges of that voice? There was.

Miss Adelaide turned abruptly as she was about to introduce McCale to the young man who had come in with her. She made a futile gesture as if to ward the girl off, but Veronica was out of the room before the movement was even completed.

McCale found himself hanging in the air, so to speak, pumping the hand of a man whose name he hadn't heard.

The Conquering Hero Comes

"Storm, Christopher Storm," the young man said. "You're Duke McCale and I've heard of you."

McCale stifled the impulse to say, "Shush." He said, "Well," and let go the hand of this big fellow who had designed and built a house called "The Nest."

Christopher Storm was tall and lean and athletic. His face missed being handsome by way of a rather square jaw and a generous mouth. He had candid blue eyes and curly hair of a nondescript shade.

Christopher maneuvered McCale toward the bottled liquors, mixed them both a drink. He motioned to a seat beside himself, saying without preliminary, "Heard about you in that dyehouse racket. Pretty keen deduction. What brings you here?"

"Wedding presents." "Not really? Didn't know you went in for small stuff."

"I have to make a living. Cases like the dyehouse murders are few and far between."

Storm's blue eyes narrowed. "Well, it just didn't seem to me that the array of bric-a-brac downstairs warranted your special talents."

McCale didn't answer. "Too true, my bright young fellow," he thought, "but if I told you that all day I've been coddling a tingle that

They might have been preceded by a fanfare of trumpets. Everyone stopped talking; everyone turned toward the door as to a stage. It was as if a spotlight had been turned on, startling the audience to quickening anticipation of the star's entrance. It was sudden and complete. Even McCale was checked in the act of raising his glass to his lips.

Something both electric and animal came into the room with Curt Vallaincourt. Even if there had not been the little piping ecstatic thrill of Sybil's "Curt, dear!"; the quick fire that lighted Victoria's glistening eyes; the husky overtones of Karen saying, "Behold the bridegroom cometh," McCale would have known the identity of this physical rhapsody.

Here was a consciously beautiful young man in a great big way: tall and wide, dark and strong, virile and violent. He had a large, curly black head, dark eyes that held a passionate promise. He was a dynamic person—the kind to whom things were bound to happen.

He acknowledged the introduction to the detective in a deep strong voice, with a hand shake that made McCale almost buckle at the knees. It was three or four minutes before the blitzkrieg of his arrival settled into a steady, slow appreciation of him. McCale himself was rarely impressed by mere sensual attraction and was loath to admit the catalytic effects of it. Here, if ever, was its complete manifestation, however. He backed away toward the piano, as better to take the scene apart, the unobtrusively as possible, he let his dark hard stare sweep around the circle.

Afterward, he was to come back to that short scene many times, trying to put together the pieces of the riddle as they presented themselves in the next few moments. It was all there, had he known it, the wheels within wheels, the red thread of danger, the shadow of death. Each intimate gesture, the shading of a phrase, each bit of conversation overheard, held portents deep and inevitable.

More Puzzles Developing

As it was, the things that remained in his mind to puzzle him were these: Conversation became general though the atmosphere still underlying a peculiar effluvia of underyling edginess. He noticed that Adelaide Bigelow seemed as overcome by the positively theatrical charm of Curt as the rest, and that even Stephen had pulled out of his alcoholic depression, and was watching Curt with an almost physical worship. Karen glowed, silver and white. Victoria's eyes were slits. Sybil was watchful. Storm was quiet, but appreciative. And Veronica was chatting nervously, the same note of strain in her golden diction. She was like a glittering fragment tossed in a glittering vortex.

It was when Curt said, in that compelling voice of his, "Very magnanimous of you, Chris, to give us The Nest," that a warning signal flashed in McCale's brain. It was spoken with such charming naivete, as if, thought McCale, the one thing he really lacked was manners. He was making a studied conscious effort.

Storm only smiled, steadily. He shrugged, retorting, "Veronica always gets everything she wants."

"Oh, Chris," Veronica put out her hand to him, started to say something, stopped.

Chris turned to her for a brief moment, a blank look coming over his face. There was a lost world in his eyes.

Victoria laughed shrilly. She made a quick nervous gesture, bit her lower lip, and looked a sudden significant, pleading question— to Curt. Curt seemed to square off to her. He shook his head as if he were saying, "No."

Everyone was concentrating upon Storm and Veronica at that moment and McCale thought no one else saw that exchange of glances between those other two. Afterward he was to wonder.

Vallaincourt went over to his future stepmother-in-law, almost as if in apology for neglecting her. She was a little high on too much sherry and was quite crushing to him. In a bad-tempered manner she shook off his attempted coddling. Without her fixed cosmetic smile, her face was an unbecoming mask, her make-up unable to disguise her middle-age. There was a puzzle there in the coolness between Curt and Sybil.

HOUSEHOLD MEMOS... by Lynn Chambers

Many Ways Are Given For Preparing Fresh Fruits



Baking is a good way of preparing apples and other fruits because it's easy and it also saves precious minerals and vitamins.

Fruit Feast

If you're one of those people who can't think of enough ways to serve fruit, then look over some of our suggestions today. They will get plenty of fruit into the diet as well as plenty of ways to serve it.

Sometimes ago someone asked me if one could eat too much fruit, and I replied hesitantly, "No." Most of us don't get enough, and even if we go over the allotted amounts of fruits and citrus fruit, it won't do even a bit of harm.

Use fruits fresh as often as possible to eat just as they come from orchards and gardens. Try chilling them just a bit if you want them to be really palatable. Use them often in a salad, and in that way you won't destroy their precious store of vitamins and minerals.

Fruits can be combined with other foods to make them extremely popular. Here's a variety plus for you in the form of real, down-to-earth goodness in recipes.

French Peach Pie

(Serves 4 to 6)
6 to 9 peaches
1 9-inch unbaked pie shell
¼ cup butter
1 cup sugar
¼ teaspoon cinnamon
¼ teaspoon nutmeg
½ cup flour

Mix flour, sugar and spices. Cut in butter until crumbly. Arrange peaches (peeled and cut in quarters or eighths) in the unbaked pie shell. Cover with crumbly mixture. If peaches are not very juicy, add a few tablespoons of water to peaches. Bake in a hot (450-degree) oven for 10 minutes, then reduce heat and bake another 40 minutes in a moderate (350-degree) oven.

Here is a dessert with the goodness of fruit added to eggs and milk. It's a perfect recipe for making for the younger children:

Baked Apricot Custard

(Serves 6)
2 eggs
1 tablespoon sugar
¼ teaspoon sugar
¼ teaspoon lemon extract
1 cup scalded milk
12 canned apricot halves
12 pecan nutmeats

Beat eggs slowly, add sugar, salt and extract. Add hot milk, slowly, and stir until sugar is dissolved. Drain the peaches and chop nuts, then arrange them in greased custard cups. Pour the custard mixture into them, sprinkle chopped nuts on top and bake in a rather slow (300-degree) oven

LYNN SAYS:

Fruit Tips: Try to find fruit that is ripe but still not spoiled. Wash and dry carefully as soon as you have brought it home.

Never pile soft fruits on top of each other, but try to lay flat over a surface. Chill just before serving.

Never wash berries until just before serving, or they will mold. To keep perfectly they should be stored in their little baskets, washed and drained gently just before serving or using.

It's best to store fruits in a cool rather than a freezing place as many fruits cannot stand refrigeration, particularly bananas.

If fruits, such as bananas, apples and pears, tend to turn dark after peeling and cutting, sprinkle a citrus fruit juice over them to prevent discoloration. Lemon, grapefruit or orange juice may be used.

If fruits are cut and shredded before using, cover and store them before serving to prevent a loss of vitamin C.

LYNN CHAMBERS' MENU

Baked Chicken in Milk
Fried Eggplant Mashed Potatoes
Giblet Gravy
Apple Cole Slaw Biscuits
Fruit Cobbler Beverage

about 25 minutes. You may have been hearing a lot about this dessert recently, and though it's an old-fashioned dish which grandmother no doubt knew well, I thought you might like the instructions:

Apple Pan Dowdy

(Serves 6)
4 tart apples, sliced
¼ cup brown sugar or maple syrup
1 cup cake flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
¼ cup melted butter or margarine
½ cup sugar
1 egg
¼ cup milk
½ teaspoon grated lemon rind
1 teaspoon lemon juice

Grease a round or square cake pan. Heat oven to moderate, about 350 degrees. Wash apples, core, peel and slice. Place them in baking pan and sprinkle with sugar or maple syrup. Stir sugar into melted shortening, add egg and beat vigorously. Sift dry ingredients together and add alternately with milk. Fold in lemon juice and rind. Pour batter over apples and bake in moderate oven about 30 minutes. Remove from pan immediately and serve warm with plain or whipped cream.

Now that bananas are here again you might like some variety in ways to use them. Here are some sure-fire ideas.

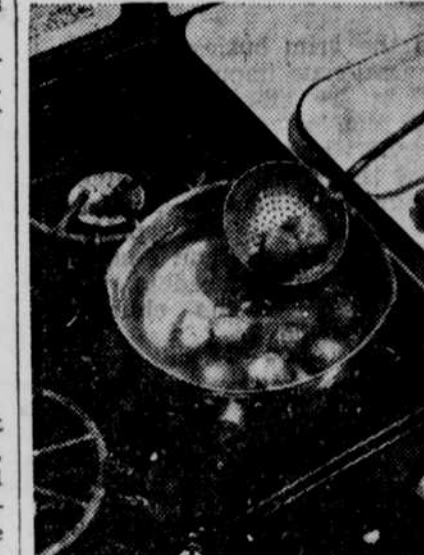
Banana Praline Ice Cream

(Yields 1 quart)
3 very ripe bananas, sieved
1 tablespoon lemon juice
¼ cup brown sugar
½ cup milk
2 eggs, separated
Dash of salt
1 cup rich or evaporated milk, chilled
1 teaspoon vanilla
¼ cup broken pecan meats

Add lemon juice, sugar and milk to bananas. Beat egg yolks until golden colored and fluffy; add to banana mixture. Whip rich milk until doubled in volume and add to bananas. Fold in vanilla and frozen egg whites and turn into beating tray. Freeze until mushy, with control set at coldest point. Stir well and then freeze again. Serve, garnished with slices of banana.

Banana Scallops

(Serve With Meat)
Slice peeled yellow or slightly green-tipped bananas crosswise into pieces ¾ to 1 inch thick. Dip slightly in one beaten egg. Drain, then



To make banana scallops, follow directions given in the column, and fry very carefully so that the scallop will be evenly browned all over. They're nice with meat!

roll in ¾ cup of finely crushed corn flakes, bread crumbs or cornmeal. Fry in shallow fat until golden brown.

Cherry Cobbler

(Serves 6)
1½ cups flour
1½ teaspoons baking powder
¼ teaspoon salt
¼ cup sugar
¼ cup lard or other shortening
½ cup milk
3 cups stoned cherries
1 cup sugar
¾ cup corn syrup
1 tablespoon butter
3 tablespoons flour

Sift flour and then sift again with sugar, baking powder and salt. Work in cold shortening with a pastry blender, and add milk to make a soft dough. Roll out to ½ inch thickness on lightly floured board.

Heat cherries and add combined sugar, corn syrup and flour. Then add butter. Pour hot into baking dish and cover with rolled dough. Cut slits in dough and bake in a moderately hot (400 to 425-degree) oven for 20 to 25 minutes or until crust is golden brown.

This may be served warm or cold with plain cream or a foamy sauce.

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