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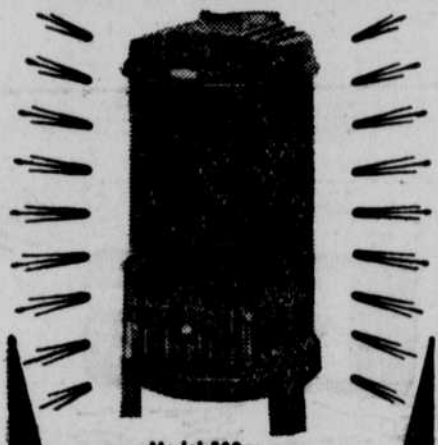
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There should be no doubt that prompt treatment is wise. Use Doan's Pills. Doan's have been winning new friends for more than forty years. They have a nation-wide reputation. Are recommended by grateful people the country over. Ask your neighbor!

DOAN'S PILLS

Murder in Plain Sight
by GERALD BROWN
W.N.U. FEATURES

Duke McCale, private detective, is guarding the wedding presents at the Bigelow mansion. He senses that old Miss Adela Bigelow is afraid of something more serious than theft. He meets the bride and groom-to-be, Veronica and Curt Vallaincourt, and Veronica's mother, Sybil, and her brother and sister, Stephen and Victoria. There is a sinister undercurrent that McCale is quick to catch. He discusses the situation with Ann Marriot, his secretary and fiancee, while they are dining at a fashionable night club. They are impressed by the beauty and charm of the club's featured singer, Shari Lynn. Shari goes to a table and joins a big, handsome man—Curt Vallaincourt!

He kissed her hard on the lips, noticing her complete calm indifference. She was angry.

"Thanks ever so."

"Oh, Lord," he groaned, "don't go giving me your impersonation of Bette Davis now. I'm going to the Print Club to see Jerry Tate."

"Oh, all right. Go ahead. I know what you're like when you smell blood, you hound." She searched his face quickly. "Does it look that bad, Duke? I seem to have been feeding myself all evening, though I've tried to tell myself it was my proximity to you and one of your fabulous hunches."

He nodded slowly. "Yeah. Something tells me there is something very dirty afoot. It's only breaking out in little places here and there, but there's bound to be an explosion of some kind in the offing. I'm short on information, baby, and a little late on the scene. What I do, I've got to do quickly."

"Well, go ahead, but be sure when you pass the Old Howard to stay on the other side of the street." She laughed, dismissing him with a return to her old facetiousness.

"You are a jealous witch," he chided her, closing the door on her retreating figure.

CHAPTER V

The flash of a million golden sparks went by their table. McCale looked out of the corner of his eyes and saw that a tall woman with hair the color of spun sugar was passing. He recognized her immediately. It was Karen Bigelow. She saw him, but gave no glance of recognition. Her eyes were fixed straight ahead in a cold, hard gaze at the table where Vallaincourt sat with the torch singer. She deliberately walked toward them.

"That your Karen?" Ann whispered.

"Uh-huh."

"Well, I do hope there'll be no trouble."

If there was, it was remarkably well-bred and closely held. Karen reached the table and spoke quickly to Vallaincourt. He looked amazed, shaken. He turned to Shari Lynn once, blindly. But the Lynn girl only sat there, utterly relaxed, her mouth a sulky sneer. Karen took something from her bag and handed it to Shari. She looked once at Curt, a long, searching, smoldering look, and turned away. Vallaincourt made a move to follow her, but Shari caught his hand, drawing him back. He almost stumbled in the alcove.

It was then that McCale, swiveling around to the startled Ann, had his second shock of the evening. Not five tables away, almost hidden in a corner, sat Stephen Bigelow. There was a row of empty glasses in front of him as though he had ordered them all at one time. Yet he did not seem to be drunk. His eyes were sunken in that face so prematurely cadaverous but they glittered with a cold, sardonic amusement that was frightening.

Ann Marriot gripped McCale's hand in an imploring gesture. "Let's get out of here."

"Maybe the fun is only just beginning," he said, rising with alacrity.

On the steps, a slight altercation was taking place. Karen Bigelow, swathed in ochre wool, was trying to restrain a slightly bedraggled, fustily dressed woman. McCale saw that it was Sylvia Bigelow, bulging out of a sheath of satin.

Karen was saying, "You mustn't go in, Mother Bigelow, you just can't. Let me take you home."

"Get out of my way!" the older woman said.

"I can't let you go in. Besides, he's not there, Sybil. He really isn't there."

"How do you know?"

"I looked."

"You came here to see him?"

"Yes, yes—but he isn't here. Come home with me, Sybil."

The grotesque Sybil hesitated a moment, her bright feverish eyes searching Karen's face. Then she pushed her forcefully aside with crushing arrogance.

Stephen Bigelow Is Discussed

"If you like that type—pardon me."

"Oh, well, if I had to be cast away on a desert island or if some rainy afternoon—or—"

"That's it—just or—to proceed. That little romance was short-lived. Don't ask me why."

"Maybe Steve got wind of it."

"Stephen Bigelow? That washed-up Romeo. One look from Karen or Mother Sybil would squelch him. I've seen them all together. It was like a peek at the motive behind Lysistrata—"

He chuckled to himself as he got back into the cab, giving the address of the Print Club. The Old Howard, local landmark of burlesque, was a standing joke between them. During a former investigation, he had got himself mixed up, almost fatally, with a girl whose profession was appearing in various night-club extravaganzas. In the glow of infatuation he had nearly married her. They'd gone to New York, where he had intended to set up an agency for himself after the completion of his first case in Boston, but an offer of seven hundred dollars a week from the producer of a higher type of entertainment had estranged them. He just couldn't see himself as the husband of a woman who was being cute in front of an audience.

He was not falsely modest and, indeed, took a rather harsh, cynical attitude toward vice. However, that affair was permanently wrecked. His inamorata had gone into her show, got her seven hundred per week, and McCale was given himself one big horse-laugh. He had retraced his steps to the Hub, starting his business there, relying altogether on the success of his one case to get him going.

A Newspaper Man Gives the Lowdown

He lit a cigarette and sat with his feet up on one of the adjustable seats of the taxi as it bumped along Cambridge street. He thought he had done rather well in the time he had spent in Boston, in spite of obstacles such as his decision not to take divorce cases, not to hold out on the police, not to get in the way of rival agencies. He had managed to keep his head above water and had acquired a reputation of honesty and discretion besides. His lip curled in self-derision as he laughed in the face of his own expansive ego.

"No sense being so damned complacent, boy." He was talking to himself like a Dutch uncle. "So far, you haven't got much forrader on the problem at hand."

He sighed unappreciably as the cab drew up with a screech of brakes before a tall, gray office building. Between this and another older structure was a narrow alley, at the back of which could be seen a faintly lighted doorway. McCale made for this. From behind the stark walls on each side of him, he could hear the rumble and roar of machinery, for the presses of the biggest newspaper in town had their home there.

The Print Club, where pressmen and reporters gathered to drink and converse throughout the night, was on the third floor of the narrow edifice at the end of the alley. Duke opened the door and went up the

winding iron stairs to the bare, undecorated rooms which were furnished with square wooden tables and chairs of the kitchen variety.

McCale went over to the bar and asked for Jerry Tate. The barman nodded in the direction of the third room, raising a quizzical eye at McCale's formal attire. McCale threw him a hard, deliberate scowl, and made for the door. Just inside, a young, irascible, nervous-looking man sat alone at a table, playing solitaire. He did not look up as McCale sat down facing him.

"Hello, Jerry," said McCale. "Having your good-night quart?"

"Hi, sleuth," he said in a rasping voice. "Where have you been—all dressed up? Is there a convention you had to attend?"

"Out to dinner."

"Well, well. Times have changed."

"Isn't it the truth! But you see, I haven't forgotten the old days. I come straight from the lap of luxury to visit my old pals."

"I'm all agog." The dark fellow poured himself a finger of whisky and swallowed it in one gulp. "No kidding, Duke, I'm glad to see you. However, you've probably got an axe to grind. So give while I'm still sober."

"As usual I'm after information."

"So—"

"About a great big, husky, handsome young man named Vallaincourt."

Jerry Tate gave a low whistle and fixed McCale with a baleful glance.

"So they've called in the OGPU?"

"Who?"

"The Bigelows. Who else? How much you soaking them?"

"Now, see here, Jerry. I haven't said—"

"You don't have to. I don't have to be a detective—not even a lousy reporter—to put two and two together. What I can't get over is why they've let it slide over this late day. You're a bit on the tardy side, aren't you?"

"I'll say. The wedding is next week, so I'm running around in circles—but fast. What can you tell me about him?"

"Very little, I'm afraid. He hits the high spots, does a lot of gambling, plays around fast and loose. Spends lots of dough."

"Where does he get it?"

"Search me."

"Oh, come now."

"Well, rumor has it that it comes from the Bigelows mostly."

"I doubt that."

Tate shrugged. "Some other old gal, then."

"What about his antecedents?"

"Don't know. Springs from Chicago, I'm told."

"How did he get aboard the Mayflower—that is, how did he burrow his way into the bosom of the Bigelow family?"

"Well, now, let's see. First time I remember him around the Gay White Way, he had Victoria Bigelow in tow. Vicky seemed to have the upper hand there for a while. Then there were whispers—very soft—but whispers, my friend, that Mrs. Stephen Bigelow was interested—in a purely platonic way, we hope."

"The beautiful Karen."

Stephen Bigelow Is Discussed

"If you like that type—pardon me."

"Oh, well, if I had to be cast away on a desert island or if some rainy afternoon—or—"

"That's it—just or—to proceed. That little romance was short-lived. Don't ask me why."

"Maybe Steve got wind of it."

"Stephen Bigelow? That washed-up Romeo. One look from Karen or Mother Sybil would squelch him. I've seen them all together. It was like a peek at the motive behind Lysistrata—"

"Oh, my Lord. If you're going to quote—"

"I'll spare you. Speaking of Mama though, she had her day in the sun, too. She was here and there giggling and goosing over him for quite some time. Nice set-up, eh?"

Young Tate surveyed the table top with wise old eyes. He shook his head. "He finally did get around to Veronica. Right through the family to the pot of gold."

"Kind of roundabout, you think?"

"Now, I don't know. It may be he thought he was being clever."

McCale rose to go. "You don't know of any tie-up between him and Shari Lynn, the singer that's doubling at the Abbey and Latin Quarter shows?"

"Nothing I can vouch for. They seem to be on pretty good terms. By the way, I do know that pressure was brought to bear some-gossip along the line over a bit of gossip Watts printed in his column. Orders went through to squelch anything more of the sort that might come under the snooping eye."

"Which only shows that the great can buy protection."

"Oh, well. Come the revolution."

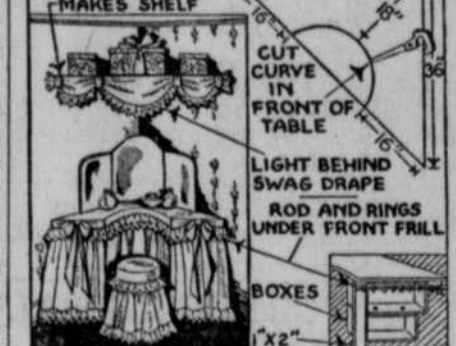
"Just. Well, thanks, old boy."

"For what?"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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By Ruth Wyeth Spears



into a corner and is so designed that you can sit up close to the triple mirror.

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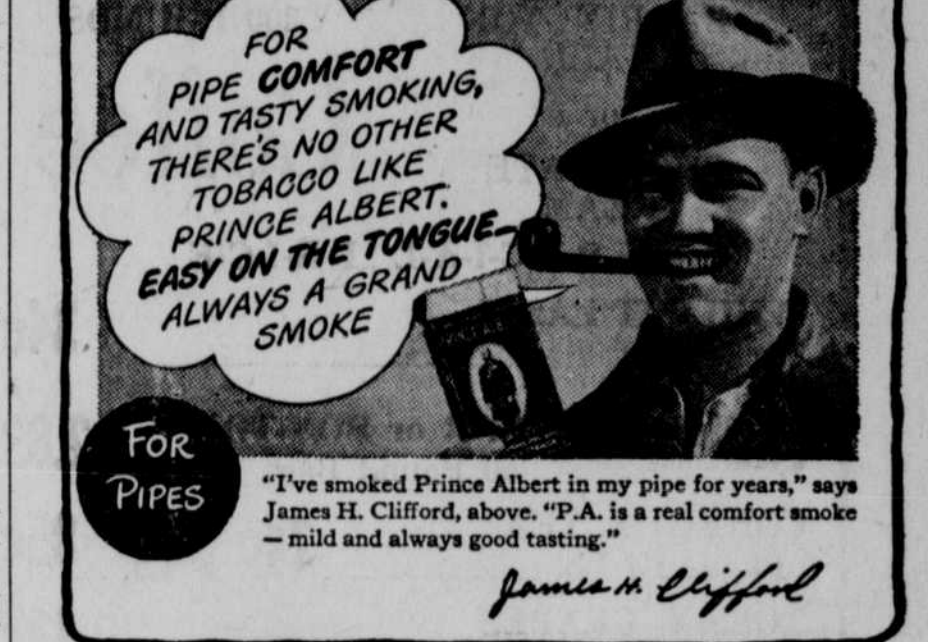
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