

# Murder in Plain Sight

vestigating the murder of Curt Vallaincourt, who was about to marry Veronica Bigelow, heiress to thirty million dollars. McCale trades information with police lieutenant Donlevy, and learns that Veronica is the one the police suspect. The other members of the family all have alibis, but none is above suspicion. This includes Veronica's mother, Sybil, her sister and brother, Victoria and Stephen, and Stephen's wife, Karen, Shari Lynn, former wife of Vallaincourt, may also be involved. McCale and his assistant, Rocky, hunt in the park for the murder weapon. They have reason to believe that the gun will be found in the old cannon.

#### CHAPTER X

In silence, they climbed the rise of ground where the old World War cannon stood. It was Rocky who pushed his longer arm into its barrel, groping, grunting. He withdrew it finally, growling his disappoint-

"No soap, Duke," he said. "I touched bottom. Nothing there but a handful of leaves."

McCale was puzzled. "Leaves at the bottom of that shaft? Nonsense. Let's see." He snapped the button of his flashlight.

In the round yellow circle of light, he examined the "leaves" Rocky held in his hand. An exclamation of surprise escaped his lips. The handful of "leaves," tangled, wet, was obviously a woman's redhaired wig.

Shari Lynn was noticeably done in. She lolled on the divan in an almost unnatural attitude. McCale thought for a fleeting moment that she had passed out or was dead.

"Oh," she said, "it's you." "The door was ajar," he offered, and knew that instant that she had been expecting a visitor. She swung herself off the divan

abruptly at that and staggered to her feet. She looked at him, her eyes snaky and vicious.

"Get out of here before I call the desk and have you thrown out. I've got nothing more to say to you-or your friend, the lieutenant, either." He fished out a cigarette and said over the flame of his lighter, "So you told them your little story?" She smiled like a contemptuous

cat. "Sure. I told it." "Why? Would you rather have waited until morning to put the finger on Veronica Bigelow?" She laughed a high-pitched

witch's laugh. "You're a rat-trap."

"Maybe. Just thought I'd ask." barrel, groping. uneasiness under her bravado. "Listen, mister. Just what is it

you want with me?" "I only want to ask you a question or two and give you some ad-

"Look here," he said. "I know it was you who ran away from the Vallaincourt murder. You were the only woman who ran over the hill. I know, because I was at an upstairs window, and if there had been two women, I would have seen them both."

"You know a lot," she said sullenly, "but you can't prove it."

"I'm on my way to." "Oh, yeah? Well, nuts to you. My story is still good. Besides, the woman had red hair. If you saw her, you'd know that."

"Well, then?"

"Well-then." He threw the red wig down on the coffee table between them. She gasped. that?'

#### Shari Gets a Warning

"In the cannon where you hid it. Now get this straight. Any cop or judge or lawyer is going to know after I produce this wig that your story is phoney. You should have taken more pains with it if you wanted your story to stick. You're in a jam, lady. I think you're going to be in a worse one. You're making a little gamble on your own somewhere along the line and I think you'd better tell me what it

Her eyes narrowed, Tartar-like, for a brief instant. "I'll give you five minutes. Think

He went over to the desk, holding out his wrist as if timing her by his watch. It was five minutes of roved cynically over the pictures of Shari Lynn's boy friends. There was a sailor and a petty officer, a jockey, a tall, unhappy-looking marine, an army lieutenant, and-Mc-Cale suppressed a smile-an acrobat in white tights. There were several others, proving that, besides her catholic taste, Shari was evidently attracted by anything in uniform. There was no picture of Curt

At two o'clock, he turned to her again. She surprised him by beginning to talk almost immediate-

Vallaincourt. McCale wondered at

She had found the wig at Vallaincourt's apartment, days before. He had some woman who came there to see him, someone disguisee as Veronica. She denied she was the woman. She didn't know, hadn't the slightest idea who could have been checking up on him. No, who-

Duke McCale, private detective, is in- | to think that only Veronica went | ing in looking more like one of the there. It was hardly rational, because you'd think the only person to whom it would matter would be Veronica herself. Lately the woman hadn't come any more. Hence the wig which she had found.

"Didn't Vallaincourt confide in you at all?" McCale asked. "No. Why should he?" "I've played with the idea that

you were once his wife." A secret look behind the mascara told him he was right, but she said

He got up, reaching for his hat on a nearby chair. At the door, he turned, his dark-eyed face all sharp points and edges in the light. "You're in a bad spot." He tried

to control the hardness in his voice. about." "I'd lock the door if I were you." He saw fear burning bright in her

"Is that the advice you were going to give me?"

"Yes," he said. He became deadly serious. Somehow he had to get through to her. He slipped a business card from his wallet and placed it on a nearby table.

"If you're frightened or just want to talk," he said, "call me at the number on that card. You really



Rocky pushed his arm into the

should talk, you know. I mean more than you've talked so far. I know you're holding back something important-something that is dangerous to someone. I think you're planning to sell that information. A little blackmail, maybe. But let me warn you, you are dealing with a cold-blooded murderer. You're in danger, Miss Lynn. "You know

She laughed loudly, hysterically. "You fool," she screamed. "You think you know a lot. Well, what do you know? Just a lot of bunk I told you. You think you can scare me into admitting something. I can take care of myself. What're you trying to do? Get out! Get out!"

His last look showed her ashen and distraught. She was stretched on the davenport, hair dishevelled, mouth lax, deep circles under the horrible eyes.

"That's how she'll be when she's old," McCale thought as he reached the pavement. He walked slowly down Tremont street, gulping deep

## Victoria Bigelow Seeks Her Letters

breaths of wet air.

The buzzer sounded in the outer office. McCale looked at his watch. It was three in the morning. He walked quickly to the door, pressing the button that released the lock in the vestibule. He opened the office door, looked out into the hall, and wondered who could be calling at that hour. Sharp heel clicks told him it was a woman coming up the stairs. The head and shoulders, then the figure of a girl swathed in furs, with a cowl concealing most of her face, rose out of the stairwell

She saw him, hurried forward with a short laugh and stepped inside hurriedly. She pushed back the cowl of her Persian lamb coat While he waited, his eyes and he saw the black hair and Beardsley face of Victoria Bigelow. She perched herself on the corner of the desk, loosening her coat and

swinging one leg. "I could stand a drink. You might

be that hospitable." Silently he poured her a whisky and soda from the cabinet. He still looked at her with hardly concealed hostility in his glance.

"About my being followed here, she said, sipping her drink, "have no fear. The police didn't even put a man on the house. Old unimpeachable family stuff."

'You can't be sure." "Sure enough." She shrugged the

suggestion away. She slipped off the desk with a languorous movement, meant to be provocative, McCale supposed. Scrutinizing her closely, he was aware of the complete artificiality of her make-up. She had tried to effect an exotic appearance, in the ever was watching evidently had manner of the cinema, but succeed-

Futires. His musing swiftly encompassed the whole lot of them, the Bigelows en masse. With the possible exception of Miss Adelaide, they were unreal, without authenticity.

He watched Victoria with a bored expression as she fingered a book on the desk, examined the Lester Varga painting of a Nubian woman which hung over a bookcase to see if it was an original.

"It's late," he said, breaking the silence. "You came to see me about something. It must be important for you to call at this hour. I hate to hurry you, but if you've satisfied your curiosity, perhaps you'll tell me what this is all

She turned abruptly and came over to him.

"I want you to do something for

"What can I do for you?" His voice was urgent and exasperated. "Well"-she fumbled for a phrase -"you'll probably have an-an opportunity to go through Curt Vallaincourt's things, won't you?"

He looked up, pursing his lips. "We-e-ll." Better not tell her the cupboard was bare.

"There is something of minethat is, Curt had some letters that belong to me. I thought-"

"That I might take them out from under the eyes of the police? I'm afraid I wouldn't have the chance. By this time, the place has been gone over with a vacuum cleaner." "But they wouldn't just be in any ordinary place. I'm sure he had a hiding place somewhere in that

apartment. A wall safe or-or something." "I doubt it. It seems perfectly obvious that you have already looked in every available place."

"Why I-" ". . . Tut, tut. Your intonation

gave you away." "My, you're clever, aren't you?" "Let us say-well-trained. You visited Vallaincourt often?"

"No, I-well, that is, I went there once in a while for cocktails, with a few friends." She was on her guard now. "Often enough to look about for something that was

"Vallaincourt was hanging onto your correspondence." "Oh, no."

"Then why didn't you just ask

"I did, but he'd only laugh and say he'd give them all back when She caught herself. She bit her lower lip sullenly.

"When he was safely married to Veronica Bigelow, I'll wager." "You're quite the Sherlock, aren't

you, mister? Listen, can I or can I not buy your services? I want those letters. Do I get them?" She moved closer to him and stared him in the face boldly, a viperish intensity in her eyes. For a moment, McCale gazed deeply into her vicious little soul.

"Not from me." His voice was as cold as steel. He turned away from her with a

brusqueness intended to convey that he was through with their little interview. He spoke quietly. "I'm sorry.

wish you'd take my word for it that there are none of your letters at the Vallaincourt apartment. No letters of any kind, in fact."

She eyed him narrowly. "You've been there already." He nodded.

"Thanks, but I don't believe

"All right," he went on wearily, "don't believe me. But I assure you, there is nothing there. There's not a wall safe or a sliding panel in the whole shebang." "The police-"

"I hardly think so. I was there before they arrived."

She seemed suddenly drained of vitality. There was a thwarted look on her face. "So that's that." "Just that, I'm afraid. However, I think you'll hear from your let-

## A Parting Shot Startles McCale

"Oh, my God! What a stink they will make strewn all over the front pages of some slimy paper. It'd take more than the Bigelow money

"I don't mean that." "Oh!" The echo of it hung in She gazed at him once more as

if to reassure herself of his honesty. His inscrutability seemed to have baffled her. "We shall see what we shall see." she said finally, a note of derision

and forced facetiousness in her He followed her to the door, watching her down the stairs. At him now! the turn, she looked back at him. She stopped, waiting a moment un-

til he became aware that she intended to explode a farewell bomb-"If they don't turn up, Sherlock, I'll go to Shari Lynn for them, what?" She laughed insolently as

she continued down. McCale shook his head in utter weariness as he went back in. He was sure the interview had been a flasco. At least his share of it.

By VIRGINIA VALE

THIS is a burst of loud ap-I plause for Eric Sevareid's autobiography, "Not So Wild a Dream." It's the story of a boy from a small town in South Dakota who has never lost his love for that small town, through the years when he's become one of our best political and war reporters. Many of us will never forget some of his broadcasts over CBS during the war, and still look forward to his Saturday night talks. Sevareid covered the war in France, England, China, Italy, Germany and Burma. But this is not primarily a war book; it is the inspiring story of 34 years of a man's life, superbly written, a story of the world in our

Van Johnson says his role in "The Romance of Rosy Ridge" is the kind for which he's been praying: "It's



VAN JOHNSON

my first character part and the first time I have been able to break away from that 'boy next door' type of characterization."

During her first London luncheon, Goldwyn Girl Martha Montgomery asked for a glass of milk, and the waiter asked for her certificate. "In England," he explained, when Martha looked blank, "Milk is issued only for infants and invalids. If I may be excused for the observation, I should venture to say you are neither." The girls are touring the provinces before the opening of "The Kid From Brooklyn."

Helen Nielson, who makes her screen debut in Columbia's Glenn Frints, large, colorfast pieces, 500 for \$1, sample packet 10c. JAMES SALES CO., ford-Janet Blair starrer. "Gallan Journey," was discovered by talent scouts in the cast of a Hollywood Little Theatre play-but she's a cousin Veronica Lake's, lives with Veronica, and was coached by her. But maybe a screen career for her has always been her fate; when she was twelve she appeared in an amateur performance in a New York City neighborhood theater and walked off with the first prize-and the prize was a Shirley Temple doll!

David Niven calls his new Santa Monica home "The Fortress," not only because it resembles one; it's manned entirely by seasoned combat veterans. Even the nurse who cares for his two boys was a member of a mixed anti-aircraft battery. and has several planes to her credit. Niven himself, who'll be seen next in Goldwyn's "The Bishop's Wife." was a colonel in the British Rifle

The first exclusive long-term contract for an acting horse has been hoofed (like a finger print) by Dice, the featured stallion in "Duel in the Sun." He's signed up for two years with David O. Selznick.

Now that "Deception" is being shown, Bette Davis wants to do a comedy; since 1941, she's been specializing in tragedies. "People will think I'm a humorless character who stalks the corridors with a candle scaring small children," said Bette. She thinks her best comedy role was in "It's Love I'm After," which was made in 1937 and was overshadowed by the Award-winning "Jezebel."

The casting department at Warner Bros. spent six days finding 12 male and 12 female dancers who could do an old-fashioned waltz for "My Wild Irish Rose," the Chauncey Olcott picture. Twenty - two applicants tested and lost.

Skitch Henderson, young planist of the Bing Crosby program, fully intended to become a concert pianist when he left England and came to his native America. But-once he was introduced to American jazz, he changed his mind, and look at

ODDS AND ENDS - Richard Newman, creator of gowns for stars, is doing 20 super-specials for Lauren Bacall to wear opposite Humphrey Bogart in "Dark Passage" . . . Ida Lupino is being taught to stutter for her role as a mountain girl in Warner Bros.' picture, "Deep Valley.". . Linda Darnell took off 20 pounds for "Forever Amber.". . . Rory Mallinson, his wife and three children have moved into a Quon-set hut in Groffith Park's veteran housing project, says it's much better than Things were piling up too quickly, too fast, one conclusion contradicting another.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

the garage they moved from. . . . But lay Norris, RKO actor, who's had trouble finding a place to live, has inherited a hotel in Albany, Ga.

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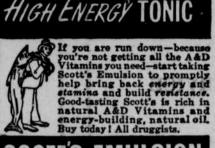
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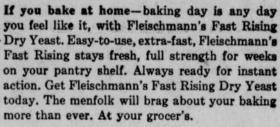
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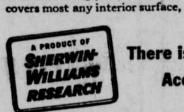
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