

First Two Pages

The Bride Wore Gold: A New Orleans Wedding

This story grew out of a five word prompt for an on-line writers group. Yellow, bread and bride were the key words around which I wrote a one paragraph story about a scheming waitress poisoning the bride's bread pudding.

The Darkhouse Books *Destination: Mystery!* Anthology called for cozy mystery short stories about typical American vacation destinations. I set my story in New Orleans, the second most popular destination wedding city in the United States. The bride would wear gold, trimmed with purple and green, Mardi Gras colors. And she would be the target of foul play, a life-threatening substance in her New Orleans bourbon bread pudding.

I first wrote a wedding story, but it was too short. I needed to set up who was after the bride and why, so the story takes place over three nights and two days of wedding activities. My wonderful critique partner Cari DuBiel advised that the editor liked longer stories, with a fast start and satisfying ending.

Look, there's the streetcar, over there.

Nick grabbed Lizzie's hand as they dashed across Canal Street, and elbowed their way on a crowded St. Charles streetcar."



Nothing is more iconic than a New Orleans streetcar ride. We rumble with Lizzie and Nick through the Garden District to Uptown, where they walk down a side street in a residential area.

The sidewalks were buckled by tree roots, the gardens in lush bloom with crepe myrtle trees, flowering vines, and perennials. They approached a white house with a raised porch supported by columns, tall windows hung with lace curtains.



Cozy stories are filled with good food, and in New Orleans, that means a crawfish boil.

Plywood table tops mounted on sawhorses filled the patio, next to a huge pot sitting on an outdoor propane cooker. Coolers and washtubs filled with iced beer lined one side. Jazz blared from outdoor speakers.

The stage set, I introduced additional characters, Nick's college roommate Bobby, and his wife Charlotte.

Blue and I were college roommates. He came north on an athletic scholarship, but preferred chasing girls and going the pre-med route to playing football. He never stopped talking about his blue tick coonhound, so I called him 'Blue.'

We meet the family coonhound, and finally, Bobby's wife Charlotte.

Charlotte was an exquisite blond, groomed to perfection, wearing a simple lavender flowered cotton shift and sandals.

Charlotte tells Lizzie someone's harassing the bride and asks for her help in preventing a mishap during the wedding festivities. The story unfolds as Lizzie unmask not one but two scheming bridesmaids determined to ruin the wedding.

Lots of cozy elements, the best of New Orleans cuisine, jazz, and a French Quarter wedding venue.

This was my first anthology publication and one of my favorite stories. I've continued to write about Lizzie and Nick's subsequent adventures in New Orleans and Louisiana.



Margaret S. Hamilton has also published stories in *Kings River Life*. She is revising the first two books in her amateur sleuth series, Lavender Cottage Interiors Mysteries, using the same characters as her short stories.

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