

THE FICTION CORNER

THE TRAGIC WEDDING

By RAY FULBRIGHT

LIBBY'S death was a shock, coming on her wedding day as it did. Neighbor folks would be shaking their heads sadly. People liked Libby. Sort of old-maidish she was, near 40, but there was kindness and generosity in her heart.

Not that her death would be a surprise. She was very frail and a chronic heart sufferer. Doc Huntley had begged her to slip off with him and have a quiet justice-of-the-peace wedding and avoid excitement. But no. She'd wanted to be with her family—what family she had, and such as it was.

With tightening throat, Doc gazed down on the thin dark figure in the blue tulle wedding dress lying on the quilted bedding. She'd fallen on the rag carpet, they had told him when he arrived, and one of the women guests had picked her up and placed her on the bed and had removed her stockings to massage her legs. Doc noticed the heavy finger marks on the thin ankles. Then his gaze swept to the digitalis bottle on the dressing table.

Libby's heart never had been in such a bad condition that a shot of heart stimulant hadn't brought her out of it. But it was obviously a severe attack. Her face was bluish, her dark eyes bulging, as if from an exploding heart. A look of abject horror had torn open her mouth, twisting her pretty face.

"My husband was settin' in the front room waitin' for the preacher and you to come, Doc," Cousin Laura said—Doc always called her Cousin Laura, because she was Libby's cousin, the only relative Libby had.

"The first guests were jest comin' up the road. I was in the kitchen trimmin' up the weddin' cake. I thought I heard Libby scream. About an hour ago it was. I came in here as quick as I could wash off my hands, and there she was a-lyin' there on the floor, but blue in the face."

Cousin Laura was a big-boned woman with suspicious, disapproving eyes. Her hair was coal black. Cynics had whispered that Laura had married Grandpappy Bogle, 40 years her senior, for his farm. He was stone deaf and couldn't (it was believed at the time) live more than six months. Grandpappy had a son, Harv Bogle, living with him. That was the family—Grandpappy Bogle, Cousin Laura Bogle, Harv Bogle and Libby.

Doc had always had an uncomfortable feeling that Laura hated him, or at least resented his taking Libby from the family.

Doc could hear Grandpappy in the front room yapping away with the guests. No matter what anyone said to him, he assumed that they were agreeing with him and went on yapping.

"Where's Harv?" Doc said.

"Harv's out to the barn sulking. I reckon—on account of the wedding," Cousin Laura said with evil suggestion. "He ain't been in all day—didn't even come in for his dinner." Then she became thoughtful, her black eyes slitting. "Now, wait a minute—I believe I seen him out on the back porch about an hour ago. Yeah, I did, come to think of it."

Doc understood about Harv not wanting to attend the wedding. He'd known that Harv Bogle had loved Libby like a man possessed. He'd threatened a half dozen times to kill himself if she didn't marry him. And when that didn't work, he practically threatened to kill her. Only yesterday he'd told Libby that

he'd rather see her dead than marrying the doctor.

Doc had brushed Libby's fears aside.

Harv was harmless. Give him a month of fishing and squirrel hunting down in the Obion river bottoms and he'd forget it. Doc had assured her. Harv was the bachelor type. He lived from day to day, felt no responsibility about anything. The only thing he planned ahead was his tobacco patch out behind the barn.

Doc found Harv sitting on the wagon tongue in the barnlot. He was distractedly scraping blue mud from his rough brogans with a



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shiny woods knife. He was a heavy-set man in tattered overalls, grizzled, his teeth showing the effects of constant tobacco chewing. He didn't talk much and spent most of his time alone in the river bottoms.

His attitude towards the doctor was surly since Doc had started courting Libby. Harv looked up dully.

"Been out here all afternoon, Harv?"

"Here and the bottom—if it's anything to you. He kept on scraping mud."

"You were seen in the back yard about the time Libby died."

"Died? Is she—?" He studied Doc suspiciously. Slowly, conviction crept over his face. "Somebody lied," he said dully, and returned his attention to his shoe.

"Harv, I never talked with Libby about it. But who gets Libby's property? She had a will, didn't she?"

Doc knew that Libby owned 200 acres of valuable bottom timber land where Harv did his hunting and fishing.

"Naw," Harv replied. "She didn't leave no will. You sort of got left out, didn't you, Doc? If'n she'd lived through the day, you'd have got yo'r hands on that land, wouldn't you?"

Doc struggled to keep from getting mad. His gaze shifted to the dry branch at the foot of the red-gummed hill. Snarled, hungry-looking sassafras grew on the bank and along the fence rows, as if it had been forced out of competition for space in the rich bottom lands and relegated to the hills where competition for food was tired and hopeless.

Doc returned to the house, looked around the barren red clay back yard. Then he entered by the back way. The back porch, screened in, was as neat as a perfume counter. Libby's room was just as neat. The

rag carpets looked as if they'd just been washed a day or so before.

Doc went to the wall telephone, rang central and asked for the sheriff.

"This is Doc Huntley, Sheriff. I want to report a murder . . . yeah, out at Grandpappy Bogle's place."

Doc hung up, turned. Cousin Laura stood in the kitchen door, her black eyes staring balefully. Slowly, doubt and indecision tore her mouth open.

"Did you say 'murder'?"

"Yes. Libby was murdered. By the person who would inherit the 200 acres of rich bottom land. Libby's land is certainly more tempting than Grandpappy Bogle's red clay hills."

"How—how—"

"Libby was picked up by her ankles and held upside down until she died from a heart attack. That's how those bruises came to be on her ankles; they certainly weren't caused by massaging. Her heart

Men who for years had listened to him give sage advice on money matters were stunned. Women who had taunted their husbands a thousand times with, "Did you read what Baruch said about safeguarding money? Why can't you be like him?" swooned. Young people who had seen his picture so often under the caption, "Warns Country to Guard Its Funds," shook their heads. Senators and representatives who had formed a habit of sending for Baruch when they wanted the straight dope on financial stability reeled and groaned.

Other people, we had all thought, could in the excitement of a gala outing in a crowded place, whip out and drop their roll while fumbling for a ticket, green sheet, notes on good things, pencils, programs, et cetera, but not Bernard M. Baruch! Never!

We could picture plenty of men carrying their money carelessly, even to the point of a wallet only halfway in the pocket, but not B. M. B. Baruch gave the finder a reward of \$500 and delivered a few brief words of gratitude, but the public is not satisfied.

To restore his prestige he must issue a statement reassuring the American public, the U. S. senate, the house of representatives and all federal economic bodies.

If there is any place to show prudence and caution it is at a race track. Baruch loses his dough BEFORE he even gets down a bet! Impossible! This department, which has been following his advice on money for years, prefers to think it was all a stunt; that he was merely conducting an honesty test. Or that, as a lover of racing, he was trying to offset the bad press it has been getting.

At any rate, speak up, Baruch, and let us have the full details. You don't want husbands everywhere answering a wife's caustic, "Why can't you be more careful with your money?" with a firm, "Aw, look at Bernard Baruch!" do you?

TYPEWRITER GENIUS
A wonder man
Is Chidey Whinn:
He puts his own
New ribbon in.

Horse Racing Ethics
"It must be remembered that it is the theory of the pari-mutuel system that the track is a stakeholder only. It receives a commission on the amount wagered and has no interest in the outcome of a race. When it is required to contribute to a minus pool by allowing place and show betting and bears a loss, the effect is to give the track an interest in the outcome of a race, although it has no chance of winning."—Maryland racing commission.

Let's keep the race track operators from being put in the awful position of having a slight interest in horse racing as horse racing, by all means.

"The Soviet union is a non-imperialist country. It is dedicated to peace and its whole record has been a record of fighting for peace. Soviets do not make war. Russia would never attack America or anybody. It is impossible."—William Z. Foster before a senate committee.

Now how do you suppose that other story ever got around?

"CHIANG KAI SHEK SAYS HE WILL CRUSH CORRUPTION." —Headline.

Wanna bet?

Governor Driscoll of New Jersey deprecates the "abysmal ignorance of youth on American history." How can you expect the kids to study hard when they can get \$100 a night for just remembering the first name of Washington on a radio program?



WIZARD OF FINANCE

Bernard M. Baruch, the very symbol of prudence and thrift, lost his roll out of his pockets at a race track. The wad, \$2,200, was found by a track attendant and returned to the elder statesman. It proved once again that Baruch is long on luck. But it left America feeling low.

That this famous American, whose every word on finance has been clung to as almost the ultimate authority on sagacity, could, even before he reached the betting windows at a race track, lose his roll came as a hard blow to people everywhere. On all sides one heard the cry, "Well, whadda-ya know about that!"

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750 ACRES in Pend Oreille Co. 90 acres in hay, 10 mi. from town on good gravel road. Electricity. Telephone. Mail rt., school bus, milk route, spring water, fair buildings. Lots of timber. Could be good stock ranch. Plenty outside range. Price \$13,500. \$6000 down. Bal. terms. J. R. Pearce, Newport, Washington.

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I SHALL LAY THIS GRIEF ASIDE

Grace Noll Crowell

I SHALL lay this grief aside;
It will wait
Until I come back again
Soon or late.

I shall move among my kind;
I shall see
No grief there as great as this
Given me.

I am wiser than I was;
I have gone
Down the way my fellow-men
Journey on.

And beside their grief my own
Is so small,
I shall not return to claim
It at all.

Tricks for Teens

By NANCY PEPPER

Your Coat, Madame
It seems just yesterday that you were brooding about your fall wardrobe. Then, along came the new look—and you had to start all over again. Well, there's never a dull moment—because summer is coming and now's the time to worry about your summer coat. What'll it be?

A SUGAR COAT?—That's the very brief boxy topper that just comes to your neckline. It's usually inexpensive—and you can wear it over everything.

A FLARED TOPPER?—It covers your neckline and it flares way out in back, the way your loud Greatcoat did last fall. Looks equally well over straight or flared skirts. You'll like it in pastel suede fabric or in plaid.

A COCOON?—It's not something that a caterpillar goes into and a butterfly comes out of. It's a topper that tapers in at the hips; that you wrap around you like a, like a—well, like a cocoon. If it's high fashion you're looking for, this is IT!

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"MONKEY GLASS"—Your mirror—or does it depend upon who's looking in it?
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"LOW MAN ON THE TOTEM POLE"—Driestest boy in the class.