

A PRETTY CORPSE

By Virginia M. Ledbetter

The road curved and ended in a tiny ravine. On the other side of the ravine was a large white sign which read "Lew Stone Nursery". In the garden behind the large white sign Lew Stone himself bent his long angular form and examined with a keen and experienced eye the buds of a red, red rose which had the faintest signs of insect bites. He flicked the tiny petals of the rose and brushed an imaginary bug from the green leaf of the flower.

He was surprised to hear the rustle of the leaves which had fallen from the trees nearby. There was no wind. There was no one at the Nursery in the morning but himself. Nobody wanted to buy flowers this early in the morning. But this time he

was wrong. Just outside the big white sign which read "Lew Stone Nursery" stood a little black girl with gobs and gobs of kinky hair piled high upon her head and tied with a piece of white rag. One of her little black hands was clasped tight and she moved on first one white or what resembled a white sneaker to the other sneaker on the other foot. She was plainly afraid.

Lew Stone stood up and then stretched his long body. The little girl remained beside the nursery sign. "What wuz yo' a doin' to dat flower dere mister?" she pointed towards the rose bush from which Lew Stone had so recently risen.

"I was clearing away all the bugs that I could find."

"Yo' shore got some pretty flowers here suh."

"Yes." Lew Stone continued to look at her. Her dress was of a faded dull color and her face was black but her eyes were large and beautiful. She seemed to him to be about the age of fourteen. Rather small for her age though. "What you want around this place?" Lew Stone asked her. "I --- aint hardly shore dat I orta ast yo' suh." She was plainly disturbed.

"Oh that's all right," said Lew Stone, "go right ahead and ask me anything you want to. Where you live anyhow? Where in the world did you come from in the first place?"

"I comed from down there." She pointed a slender black finger towards the Negro section of Hillsboro and let her finger drop once more beside her to

clutch at a rent in the hem of her frock which sadly needed a mending.

"Well what you come for?" "I comed fer some o' yore flowers suh." She closed her mouth tight and stood still for the first time. Her eyes seemed to gleam and her face seemed to become blacker.

"What you planning to do with flowers little girl. I sell these to people for money. This is the way I make my living. I sell flowers to people."

"I got some money suh. I aint astin' yo' to give me a Jesus thing. I'se ready to pay fer them." She looked as if she were ready to cry now. Her shoulders had a desolate droop and the rent in her dress was left open for all eyes to see. Her hands were together clasped. Such black little hands covered with grims sadly in need of a good washing.

"Well all right but I still want to know what you want to do with flowers."

"I wants dem fer to make a pretty corpse." "A--- pretty corpse? A--- pretty corpse. What you talking about little girl?"

"I wants dem fer to make mammy pretty. She died dis mornin an' dey aint no flowers to make her pretty. De white folks allus uses white flowers an' de peoples looks some kinder good."

"Yes, yes, go on." Lew Stone was seeing for the first time something he had never seen before. Hearing for the first time something he had never heard before. Lew Stone was excited



Top: Dramatic arrangement of burnt peacock, simulated a bird of paradise plumes with bird's head in the center. Right: A high treatment of ostrich tips in three contrasting colors. Lower left: A curving spray of red and blue numidi.

and interested. "My granny says dat my mammy is gwine be buried in the low ground' without a single flower to make her corpse pretty. She looks so bad to me suh. I been passin' dis chere place fer ever a long time an' I seed all dem pretty flowers in de yard an' I wuz shore dat even if'n yo' wuz a white man, yo' wouldn't mind sellin' me dis much worth." She opened her grimy hand and extended it towards Lew Stone. Lew Stone counted five pennies, one dime, two nickles and one quarter.

"My," said Lew Stone, "you have quite a bit of money there. New what kind of flowers do you want. Roses, Chrysanthemums, Lillies or what?"

"Any kind will do suh. To tell yo' de truff, I don't know de names o' flowers, dey is all now-entful pretty to me. Dem yo' wuz a workin' on when I comed up wuz pretty, I means real pretty."

"Yes those I was workin' on when you came up were roses. I will fix you some of those." Lew Stone bent once more and commenced cutting with experienced fingers the full red roses which spread at his feet and arranging into a beautiful shape each single bud. A speck of green hove and a pull out there.

"Dem is some pretty," said the little girl clasping her hands in happiness. "Mammy will shore be a pretty corpse now. I'm gwine put some o' dem flowers in her hair. Don't yo' think dat will look kinder like de white folks do suh?"

Lew Stone turned his face to the sun and answered, "Yes little

girl, I am sure you will be satisfied with the results." He could close his eyes and imagine how the little black face lit up in happiness. He bent once more and cut the prize blossoms from a bush at his feet and placed it with the large bunch of roses which he had arranged for the little forlorn girl in the faded, dirty gingham dress.

"Dem is shore pretty suh," she said as she accepted the bunch which Lew Stone handed to her. "I is shore dat my mammy will look as pretty as dem white folks dat dies."

"Yes," said Lew Stone, "I am sure she will."

Down the street went the little black girl with the huge bunch of flowers pressed close to her warm little bosom. Lew Stone wiped a fleck of dirt from his sun colored fingers and watched the little figure until it was out of sight, only a tiny speck, then nothing.

Governor Cone was asked to make a complete and thorough investigation. The Florida lynching



NOTE:—YOUR question will be answered FREE in this column ONLY when you include a clipping of this column and sign your full name, birthdate, and correct address to your letter. For a "Private Reply" . . . send only 25c and a self-addressed, stamped envelope for my new ASTROLOGY READING and receive by return mail FREE ADVICE on (3) Questions.

Send all letters to: ABBE WALLACE, care of THE CAROLINA TIMES, 117 E. Peabody Street, Durham, N. Carolina.

NEER—I wish to know if I will get any money from the accident that I had recently.

Ans: You will be compensated—but it is up to you to get in touch with the people responsible for your getting hurt. You will receive a small check when they have investigated you thoroughly.

VMF—I enjoy reading your column. There is a woman here in this city that has broken my home up and I want to know if I will ever be happy in it again?

Ans: Yes—and the year of 1938 will bring about many changes that will make your home life happier. Continue to hold your head up and don't let yourself become disgusted and the bright side of life will turn up very soon.

PEC—This man I go with I care for and I wonder if he is really true to me and should I put my faith in him?

Ans: You have been going with him a long time and he has proven himself worthy so far—why not put your faith in him and stop doubting him. Just as long as he acts on the "up and up" then give him your time, if he changes then you two could drop him.

APG—I have been going with a married man for years. His wife knows about us but won't divorce him. Will there ever be another man in my life who will mean anything to me?

Ans: Shame on you for falling in love with a married man and no one could blame the wife for not divorcing her husband. If you would give up the married man you would stand a wonderful chance of meeting a number of worthy single boys. But you won't every marry if you continue to waste your time with a married man.

RXP—Are we ever going to buy a small home as my father often talks about?

Ans: You really are going to live in a home of your own sometime within the next two years. your father is saving and working hard towards this end and all members of the family should give him their best support and the dream will come to pass.

MLW—Seems like my luck is in the third in that state this year and the eighth in the South since January 1.

had I can't seem to get very much out of my sweethearts and want to know what I should do?

Ans: Get you a job and go to work and stop trying to pull every dime your sweethearts make out of them. Become independent and stand on your own for they won't think one bit more of you when you try to 'gold dig' them everytime you are with them.

WC—Would it really be worth my while to take up the course of study my friend has written to me about?

Ans: Indeed it would. If you do this friend will be able to place you in the same company he is managing next spring. Begin immediately on it and put your whole time into the work.

MEB—Which of the three boys I go with will make me the best husband?

Ans: None of them. You really don't know how well off you really are—stay single a few more years at any rate.

JANET AVERY GOFF MARRIES

CHICAGO, Oct. 14 — (ANP)—On October 2 a small group of friends assembled to learn that their hostess, Mrs. Janet Avery Goff, had become Mrs. James A. Hamilton. The announcement that these two prominent families of the South had been united was made by the bride's mother, Mrs. J. M. Avery. The score cards which were passed contained the surprising information. The couple were married in Joliet, Ill., on Sept. 22.

Mrs. Hamilton is the former Janet Avery of Durham, N. C., daughter of the late J. M. Avery, vice president of the N. C. Mutual Life Ins. Co.

Mr. Hamilton is the son of the late Alexander Hamilton of Atlanta, Ga.

Among those present were: C. C. Spaulding, president of the N. C. Mutual Life Ins. Co. of Durham, N. C.; Dr. and Mrs. Albert S. Beckham, Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Dixon, Representative and Mrs. Richard A. Harewood, Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. Lewis, Mr. and Mrs. Leonard McCougal, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Moore, Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Triplett, Mr. and Mrs. W. Edward Scott.

The couple are residing at 5648 Michigan Ave., Chicago.

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