

THOSE CRAZY BARTLETTS

By Peggy Dern

CHAPTER II

It was strange to be here in this place that was really her home, and she knew in her heart that she would never be anything but an alien here. These strangers were her parents, her brothers, her sisters. She liked Honey sincerely and admired her; she felt that she could very easily learn to love the small Susan. Pete was still an unknown, but she had liked his gaiety and good humor and she felt that they could be friends. As for her mother and father—well, she reminded herself as she tried to settle herself to sleep, three was really no need for her to know them very well. Home, for her was the handsome, spacious apartment in New York, with Aunt Judith and her friends. And she was a little surprised to realize that she had not thought of Martin Gray for several hours, nor had she wept for him as she had wept long and secretly in New York.

When Celia finally fell asleep she slept heavily. It was eight o'clock when she awoke. She got up hurriedly, afraid that she might upset the routine of the household by oversleeping.

At the foot of the stairs, she heard a slight sound in the kitchen, and there she found Susan, dressed for school.

"Isn't anyone else up," Celia asked. "I thought everybody was up and gone hours ago."

"Oh, no, that was Honey going to work," said Susan.

Celia followed her to the door. Susan caught up her books and a hat from the hall tree and over her shoulders said breathlessly "I'll have a nice hot lunch and it only costs a dime—"

There was the hoot of a bus horn, and the little girl fled down the walk to where a big yellow school bus had slowed for her to scramble aboard. The next moment it had gone, and Celia stood in the doorway looking after it, frowning.

She made coffee and toast and was just settling herself at an end of the scrubbed kitchen table when she heard footsteps on the stairs. A moment later Rusty thrust a red head into the room.

"Oh—hello," he greeted her, and looked as though he might draw back, but the next moment the

smell of coffee drew him in. "Don't tell me you can cook."

"I won't," promised Celia, smiling. "But any idiot can make coffee and toast."

"I don't suppose you planned on inviting somebody to share that coffee? It smells like the kind only a very smart girl could make."

"There's plenty," said Celia quickly. "And I'll make some more toast. Perhaps you'd like a couple of eggs? I've found some in the icebox and I think there's bacon, too."

"Food for the gods," said Rusty solemnly. "I'm not a god, but you'd be surprised how hungry a plain everyday guy can get!"

And so she cooked breakfast for them both, and they talked politely across the table and were on the way of becoming friends.

She didn't particularly like him either, and being a well brought up girl, she could do no less than treat him with courtesy here in this house that was, strange as it would always seem to her, her home.

When they had finished, he insisted on helping her with the dishes, and when the kitchen was once more as neat and shining as she had found it, they went out of the kitchen together and along the hall.

Around them the house still slept. There was no sound save the birds and a soft spring wind in the trees.

"I think I'll take a walk and see some of the country," said Rusty, expanding his chest, breathing deeply of the clear spring air. "Come to come along?"

"Thanks, no," said Celia and, as though afraid that she sounded unduly curt, she added, "I have an idea that Ruby Pearl would be pleased if I'd clean my own room, and I've not quite finished unpacking, so if you'll excuse me—"

"Oh, sure," he said, and strode off down the path to the orchard and was soon lost among the trees.

She was too restless just to settle herself somewhere with a book, and so she went out of the house, down the weed-grown drive, carefully avoiding the path through the orchard along which Rusty had disappeared.

She crossed a little wooden bridge and went up the hill beyond and around the curve where it joined the highway. And then she stopped, startled. For across the road a very handsome and expensive station wagon, all shining blond wood and maroon fenders and hood, lay helplessly on its side in the ditch, like an insect that had fallen and can't turn on its feet again.

Celia stood staring at the overturned station wagon. It lay helplessly on its side in the ditch.

A girl came out from behind the car as Celia emerged into the highway. She was in her late twenties; a thick, tawny mane of ruddy brown hair hung around her shoulders and her lovely face was dark with anger, her brown eyes blazing.

"Hello," said Celia, and added swiftly, "Are you hurt?"

"Only in my pride," admitted the other girl. "I fixed the steering knuckle on the darned thing

myself only yesterday afternoon, and then when I turned into the highway here, something snapped, and the next thing I knew there I was on the bank and the darned wagon in the ditch."

She looked at Celia as though seeing her for the first time, and said coarsely, "You're new in these parts, aren't you? I don't remember seeing you around before. I'm Catherine Mallory."

"I'm Celia Bartlett," answered Celia, smiling. "I only arrived yesterday."

"Bartlett?" she repeated quickly.

Celia colored a little and her chin went up, her eyes frosting ever so little. "Yes, one of the 'Crazy Bartletts,'" she said curtly.

Catherine eyed her curiously and smiled.

"Take that chip off your shoulder, gal," she ordered sternly. "You evidently didn't hear me when I said my name was Catherine Mallory—or haven't you been around here long enough to recognize the name? It's a symbol of horns and cloven hooves."

Celia relaxed a little and now her own curiosity was lively. I'm afraid I haven't heard the name before, she admitted.

Catherine nodded, drew smoke deep down into her lungs and let it drift from her nostrils, as she stood with one hand in her pocket, her eyes on the station wagon.

"We-el, for once, Win and I are going to be allowed to be the first to relate our story," she drawled, amused and a little resentful. "You see, Win, my brother, and I chobsg to ignore the war, and that's a cardinal crime in these parts."

Celia's eyes widened. "Ignore it? That sounds like the neatest trick of the week—if slightly impossible," she admitted.

"Well, it isn't impossible at all," answered Catherine forthrightly. "Of course it took a bit of planning. Win's pretty clever. As far away as 1939 he could see the handwriting on the wall. He bought the old Ives place, and we remodeled it and made it comfortable. Then we started stocking it up with the things we knew would be hard to get, or impossible, once the war actually got

going."

She turned her head and looked sharply at Celia, frowning, ready to take instant offense. "Does it seem to you a wicked and shameful thing that we turned our cars over to the Red Cross and bought new ones? We bought an ample supply of tires; we bought out wholesale grocery concern, and brought the stuff here and built a special air-conditioned storage vault to hold it. So now, because we have enough to eat and enough to live on comfortably, and because we are not taking 'an active part in the war,' we are ostracized by the funny little people all around us. Win, who is thirty-six and unfit for military duty, has invested all but a few thousand dollars of our income each year in war bonds. So if we choose to 'sit this war out,' is it anybody's business but ours?"

Celia said laughing a little. "Well, don't be so belligerent about it! I'm a stranger here, myself."

Catherine smiled at her. "Oh, sure—sorry."

She looked at Celia again and said carelessly, "I'll have to get somebody to do something about this darned car. Care to come up to the house with me and have a drink? I'd like you to meet Win and the others, too."

"Thanks, I'd like to," said Celia sincerely, and as they walked through the leafy tunnel-like drive she said curiously, "You mentioned others—your family?"

"Nope, Win and I are all that's left of the Mallorys," said Catherine casually. "But we usually have a raft of house guests."

She led the way into the house, and charm and elegance. She had time for little more than a quick appraisal before Catherine led her along the hall and into a dining room that had a wall of glass that could be slid back to bring a truly beautiful garden almost into the room. Here half a dozen people sat negligently about the table, swadling over coffee, smoking, arguing.

"Hello, everybody," said Catherine. "This is Celia Bartlett. Celia—sit here by me."

She pulled out a chair, and as Celia seated herself, her hostess the others smiled politely. The young man at the end of the table turned out to be Catherine's brother, Winship Mallory.

He, too, had been studying Celia, and now he leaned toward her a little and said pleasantly, "I'm

quite sure you're not a local product, Miss Bartlett."

"I came down from New York yesterday," she told him. I am visiting my family, the Bartletts."

The slim, pretty redhead who sat next to him on the opposite side of the table flashed Celia an unfriendly glance and engaged him in a lowvoiced conversation. Catherine, beside Celia, said under her breath, "Jennifer Lawrence is a louse. Shes going all out to marry Win. I'd be a little worried except that Win's known so many Jennifer Lawrences in his thirty years, he's pretty well insulated against them! Only I wish she'd go home—she's beginning to be a full-sized, copper-riveted bore."

Celia was beginning to believe that it would not disturb Catherine in the least if Jennifer herself had heard her.

As they left the breakfast table Win Mallory saw to it that Jennifer Lawrence did not intrude. Deftly he guided Celia out in the garden, where he proudly showed her all his plant specimens.

When at last she insisted that she must go home, she had promised to come back for dinner the following night; she had also promised to go horseback riding with Win the following morning.

When they came to the drive, a handsome shining new coupe was waiting, and Win guided her toward it, saying cheerfully, "I'll run you home."

"Oh, but that's absurd," she protested. "It's not a mile."

"Much too far for you to walk," Win assured her. "Besides, I will know then where to find you in the morning for our ride."

He put her into the car and got in beside her. Catherine called from the terrace, where she stood beside the sulky Jennifer, "Bye, Celia. We'll be seeing you a lot."

The sleek and expensive coupe had turned now and was run along the weed-grown drive to pause at the side entrance to the Bartlette home.

Celia saw Buzz and Mary Sue in the garden. They straightened to look at her; but they did not come forward. Rusty, coming up the path from the orchard, paused beside the car as Celia said lightly, "Mr. Randolph, I'd like you to meet Mr. Mallory."

Win shook hands with Rusty, his eyes taking in the little plastic jacket. "Back from the wars, eh, Randolph? How was it? Win asked Rusty looked at him carefully, as though he had been a new experience, and said almost without expression, "A trifle rugged—but illuminating! Very."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

USE EAGLE ADS

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ABOVE THE HULLABALOO

By LYTTLE HULL

FEAR THE ATOMIC BOMB

Fear is about the only instrument which seems capable of restraining us gorillas from indulging in even greater excesses than those with which we have become familiar. Fear of punishment in this earth prevents us from committing many a tempting crime: Fear of what the hereafter might hold keeps some of us on the straight and narrow path.

The enemy's fear of our chemical potential prevented the use of poison gas in this last war, and fear of retaliation will probably be the means of holding back those nations which are tempted to use the atomic bomb in the next war.

Europe, the womb of war, is dividing itself as usual into blocs—this time an eastern and a western bloc. When the people of these combinations allow their dumb politicians to bring about the next war, the great fear will doubtless be of the atomic bomb—unless we have discovered something even more devastating in the meantime. One of these opponents may decide it can, by an overnight surprise attack, so disorganize the enemy by destroying all his cities and other centers of activity, that he will be made impotent. The opposing force will be speculating along these same lines—offensively and defensively. When one of them wakes up in the morning to find itself in ruins, it will still be capable of sending off a thousand prepared plans from a thousand hide-outs to all the great centers of its foes and pulverizing them. This double pulverization will, of course, stop the war because it will have destroyed half the population and completely disorganized the civil and military systems.

So FEAR is a good thing after all if it can restrain us apes from blowing ourselves and each other into parts unknown.

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Cherryville defeated N. C. S. D. 18-7 last Friday in a hard fought game. The "Ironmen" started off with a bang when after exchanging punts, Harry (Swiftly) Rudisill runs the entire field for a touchdown (100 yds.). The "Ironmen" scored again in the first quarter when Wright faded back on N. C. S. D.'s forty-five yard line and threw a pass that Black took over the goal line for a score. Both extra points failed.

In the second quarter N. C. S. D. scored their lone touchdown by a series of pass plays that baffled the "Ironmen". The score was made by Saunders. The extra point was good and made by Bledsoe.

In the third quarter, the "Ironmen" scored again as Blackwood, who played head-up ball at center, intercepted one of the tosses about mid-field and raced to N. C. S. D.'s eight yard line before being knocked out of bounds. Wright plunged for the score on the next play.

No scoring was done in the 4th quarter and the game ended 18-7. N. C. S. D. led in first downs 11-8.

For Cherryville, "Swiftly" Rudisill, Blackwood, Wright and Blackwood were the outstanding players. For N. C. S. D., it was Saunders.

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