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*Aunt [redacted] Pieces*

# 遗产之谜

〔美〕莱曼·弗兰克·鲍姆 著

中国国际广播出版社

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## ◎序 言

《遗产之谜》是“纯爱英文馆·美国少女成长”系列中的第一本，主要讲述了无儿无女的简·梅瑞克在得知自己将不久于人世时，召来了三个未曾谋面的侄女，想要从中选一位自己满意的继承人的故事。

书的前三章详细介绍了三个侄女的家庭背景和性格状况：贝丝，15岁，沉闷、实际，是俄亥俄州贫穷的音乐教师家的孩子。帕齐，16岁，乐观、正直，母亲过世，和父亲相依为命。露易丝，17岁，有心计，父亲去世，和母亲靠着父亲留下的保险过活。前几年她们精打细算，但是她们现在有了一个新计划，决定用剩下的钱过三年奢华的生活，希望能通过经常出入上流社会而为露易丝找到一位如意郎君而因此改变命运。

其实三个女孩的性格也和家庭环境的影响密不可分，贝丝的家庭条件差，父母量入为出，成天为琐事喋喋不休地争吵，生活在这样环境下的贝丝变得沉默寡言，讲求实际。

露易丝为了能过上好日子，一心想要结识上流社会的人，她善于察言观色、伪装自己，喜怒不溢于言表，不过，从后面几章我们还能看出她打理家务的能力很强。她是一个显得较为早熟的孩子，对成人世界的事情都较敏感，这是她幼年丧父造成的。帕齐的性格是三个孩子中最好的，她虽然也是在幼年就失去了母亲，但父亲给予她的爱让她健康快乐地成长。读完这三章，读者其实已经选定了自己心目中的遗产继承人了。

书中简姨妈正式出场是在第四章，但是前三章她的亲戚们已经为我们描述得差不多了。在他们眼中，简姨妈脾气暴躁、冷漠无情，在亲人们最需要她帮助的时候她拒绝伸出援助之手。但第四章给我们的信息却稍有不同。简姨妈对下人恶言恶语，但对自己花园的一草一木却呵护有加，对疯疯癫癫的园丁詹姆斯也很宽容。事实上，她心地还是善良的，当年没有帮助她的亲戚，是因为一直以来梅瑞克一家人都难以让人信任，她后来为此感到抱歉，并在最后的遗嘱中给每人（包括约翰）都留下一笔钱，虽然她的遗嘱最终作废，但这一点足以为其洗去“无情”二字。

肯尼思应该算是本书的男一号。他是遗产的最终获得者，也是遗产最合理的继承者。他是遗产最初所有人——简姨妈的未婚夫——托马斯·布兰德利的侄子。他从小父母双亡，寄住在简的别墅里一处偏僻的小屋中，简完全迫于托马斯的临终嘱托而收留他。她除了让他有个居所之外，甚至都不愿

看他一眼。肯尼思因为缺乏教导，变得孤僻、粗鲁、无知，这样的性格使他与周围人们的关系更加恶化，他唯一的朋友是沃森律师，沃森律师尽其所能地帮他。

几个女孩陆续到了简姨妈家。贝丝觉得简姨妈令人讨厌，但和下人们交上了朋友。露易丝坚持护理简姨妈，她表现得满腔热情，还帮简姨妈打理家务。简姨妈虽然觉着她虚情假意，却难以抗拒。帕齐虽然一到简姨妈家就明确表示拒绝接受一分钱的遗产，但她的直率、倔强和充满活力的性格却让简姨妈越来越喜欢。

约翰叔叔是个神秘人物。他原来是个铁匠，消失了若干年后重回故里，从后几章我们可以得知他是个千万富翁。

帕齐为了救肯尼思而遭遇意外是所有人物关系的重要转折点。这次事故使几个女孩的关系融洽起来，她们内心的善良驱散了争夺遗产的私心，几个年轻人之间的障碍被打破了。肯尼思也有了明显的改变，他学会与女孩交往，克服了害羞，和几个女孩开始享受彼此的陪伴。

遗产风波在经历一系列事件后终于尘埃落定，约翰叔叔被帕齐“收留”回家，几次事件后，其真实身份也浮出水面。

三个女孩的成长经历还在继续，她们会经历各种冒险、上大学、结婚……

本书在人物塑造方面值得一提的是贝丝和露易丝这两个人物，她们性格具有多面性，其中有一些坏的品质，但也有着闪光点。鲍姆不怕向他的读者展示女孩的多面性，这样的

人物更真实。即便是故事的女主角，读者一边倒地给予支持的帕齐，也不是十全十美的，她有些固执，直言不讳，有点粗鲁，但从根本上讲，三个孩子都是善良的孩子。

书的精彩之处还在于词汇及表达方式上的丰富多彩。如简姨妈在说到自己的寿数不多时先后用了这样一些表达：

I'm on my last legs. (我在进行最后的垂死挣扎。)

I'll go down. (我就要咽气了。)

My end's in plain sight. (我生命的尽头就在眼前。)

书中在描绘人物时还用了大量的比喻、夸张等修辞手法，使人物形象更生动具体，富有艺术魅力。如帕齐再次回到她和父亲居住的陋室时，向约翰叔叔说起他们的生活时说道：

We'll be as snug and contented as pigs in clover. (我们的生活会舒适、安心，不亚于“土豪”。)

书中的一些词语鲜明地体现了那个时代的美语特征。如 tremulous (胆小的)， asperse (诽谤)， appellation (称呼)， portiere (门帘)等。

另外，简姨妈家的侍从们由于没什么文化，他们说话不符合文法规范，最大的特点就是缩略，如护理简姨妈的菲布斯在向贝丝述说自己脚疼时说道：

"Yes, miss; in the mornin' they's awful bad. It's being on 'em all the day, tendin' to Miss Jane, you know. But after a time I gets more

used to the pain, and don't feel it. The mornin's always the worst."

( mornin'=morning, they's=they're, 'em=them, tendin'=tending,  
mornin's= morning's )

总之，此书不管从提高英语阅读能力方面讲，还是从休闲娱乐方面讲，都是值得一看的好书。让我们随着简姨妈的侄女们踏上冒险之旅吧。



## 在场人物

---

贝丝（简姨妈的侄女）*Beth*

格拉夫教授（贝丝父亲）*Professor De Graf*

格拉夫夫人（贝丝母亲）*Mrs. De Graf*

露易丝（简姨妈的侄女）*Louise*

梅瑞克夫人（露易丝母亲）*Mrs. Merrick*

帕齐（简姨妈的侄女）*Patsy*

道尔（帕齐的父亲）*Doyle*

简姨妈 *Jane Merrick*

玛莎·菲布斯（简姨妈的护理员）*Martha Phibbs*

詹姆斯（简姨妈家的花匠）*James*

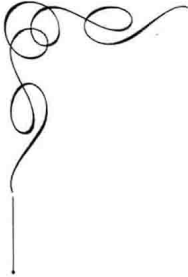
塞拉斯·沃森（简姨妈的律师、朋友）*Silas Watson*

肯尼思·福布斯（简姨妈未婚夫的侄子）*Kenneth Forbes*

约翰·梅瑞克（简的哥哥）*John Merrick*

奥斯卡·唐纳德（简姨妈家的马夫）*Oscar Donald*

米斯里（简姨妈家的女管家）*Misery*



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## *Chapter 1*

### **BETH RECEIVES AN INVITATION**

故事从清晨的一封来信展开。很少收到来信的贝丝收到了一封邀请信，这封小小的信函引发了贝丝父母的唇枪舌剑，究竟是什么样的神秘人物让他们有如此大的反应呢？贝丝会不会接受邀请呢？

Professor De Graf was sorting the mail at the breakfast table.

"Here's a letter for you, Beth," said he, and tossed it across the cloth to where his daughter sat.

The girl raised her eyebrows, expressing surprise. It was something unusual for her to receive a letter. She picked up the square envelope between a finger and thumb and carefully read the inscription<sup>①</sup>, "Miss Elizabeth De Graf, Cloverton, Ohio." Turning the envelope she found on the reverse flap a curious armorial emblem<sup>②</sup>, with the word "Elmhurst."

Then she glanced at her father, her eyes big and somewhat startled in expression. The Professor was deeply engrossed in<sup>③</sup> a letter from Benjamin Lowenstein which declared that a certain note must be paid at maturity. His weak, watery blue eyes stared rather blankly from behind the gold-rimmed spectacles. His flat nostrils extended and compressed like those of a frightened horse; and the indecisive mouth was tremulous<sup>④</sup>. At the best the Professor was not an imposing personage<sup>⑤</sup>. He wore a dressing-gown of soiled quilted silk and linen not too immaculate<sup>⑥</sup>; but his little sandy moustache and the goatee that decorated his receding chin were both carefully waxed into sharp points—an indication that he possessed at

① inscription: 题词; 铭文

② emblem: 徽章; 符号

③ engrossed in: 埋头于

④ tremulous: 颤抖的; 胆小的

⑤ personage: 名士

⑥ immaculate: 洁净的

least one vanity. Three days in the week he taught vocal and instrumental music to the ambitious young ladies of Cloverton. The other three days he rode to Pelham's Grove, ten miles away, and taught music to all who wished to acquire that desirable accomplishment. But the towns were small and the fees not large, so that Professor De Graf had much difficulty in securing an income sufficient for the needs of his family.

The stout, sour-visaged lady who was half-hidden by her newspaper at the other end of the table was also a breadwinner, for she taught embroidery to the women of her acquaintance and made various articles of fancy-work that were sold at Biggar's Emporium, the largest store in Cloverton. So, between them, the Professor and Mrs. De Graf managed to defray<sup>①</sup> ordinary expenses and keep Elizabeth at school; but there were one or two dreadful "notes" that were constantly hanging over their heads like the sword of Damocles, threatening to ruin them at any moment their creditors proved obdurate<sup>②</sup>.

Finding her father and mother both occupied, the girl ventured to open her letter. It was written in a sharp, angular, feminine hand and read as follows:

"My Dear Niece: It will please me to have you spend the months of July and August as my guest at Elmhurst. I am in miserable health, and wish to become better acquainted with you before I die. A check for necessary expenses is enclosed

---

① defray: 支付

② obdurate: 冷酷无情的

and I shall expect you to arrive promptly on the first of July.

"Your Aunt, JANE MERRICK."

A low exclamation from Elizabeth caused her father to look in her direction. He saw the bank check lying beside her plate and the sight lent an eager thrill to his voice.

"What is it, Beth? "

"A letter from Aunt Jane."

Mrs. De Graf gave a jump and crushed the newspaper into her lap.

"What!" she screamed.

"Aunt Jane has invited me to spend two months at Elmhurst, " said Elizabeth, and passed the letter to her mother, who grabbed it excitedly.

"How big is the check, Beth?" enquired the Professor, in a low tone.

"A hundred dollars. She says it's for my expenses. "

"Huh! Of course you won't go near that dreadful old cat, so we can use the money to better advantage."

"Adolph!"

The harsh, cutting voice was that of his wife, and the Professor shrank back in his chair.

"Your sister Jane is a mean, selfish, despicable old female, " he muttered. "You've said so a thousand times yourself, Julia."

"My sister Jane is a very wealthy woman, and she's a Merrick, " returned the lady, severely. "How dare you—a

common De Graf—asperse<sup>①</sup> her character? "

"The De Graf's are a very good family, " he retorted<sup>②</sup> .

"Show me one who is wealthy! Show me one who is famous! "

"I can't, " said the Professor. "But they're decent, and they're generous, which is more than can be said for your tribe."

"Elizabeth must go to Elmhurst, " said Mrs. De Graf, ignoring her husband's taunt<sup>③</sup> .

"She shan't. Your sister refused to loan me fifty dollars last year, when I was in great trouble. She hasn't given you a single cent since I married you. No daughter of mine shall go in Elmhurst to be bullied and insulted by Jane Merrick."

"Adolph, try to conceal the fact that you're a fool, " said his wife. "Jane is in a desperate state of health, and can't live very long at the best. I believe she's decided to leave her money to Elizabeth, or she never would have invited the child to visit her. Do you want to fly in the face of<sup>④</sup> Providence, you doddering old imbecile<sup>⑤</sup>?"

"No, " said the Professor, accepting the doubtful appellation<sup>⑥</sup> without a blush. "How much do you suppose Jane is worth?"

① asperse: 诽谤, 中伤

② retorted: 反驳; 顶嘴

③ taunt: 嘲弄, 讥讽

④ fly in the face of: 公然违抗

⑤ imbecile: 愚蠢的人

⑥ appellation: 称呼



"A half million, at the very least. When she was a girl she inherited from Thomas Bradley, the man she was engaged to marry, and who was suddenly killed in a railway accident, more than a quarter of a million dollars, besides that beautiful estate of Elmhurst. I don't believe Jane has even spent a quarter of her income, and the fortune must have increased enormously. Elizabeth will be one of the wealthiest heiresses in the country!"

"If she gets the money, which I doubt," returned the Professor, gloomily.

"Why should you doubt it, after this letter?"

"You had another sister and a brother, and they both had children," said he.

"They each left a girl. I admit. But Jane has never favored them any more than she has me. And this invitation, coming; when Jane is practically on her death bed, is a warrant that Beth will get the money."

"I hope she will," sighed the music teacher. "We all need it bad enough, I'm sure."

During this conversation Elizabeth, who might be supposed the one most interested in her Aunt's invitation, sat silently at her place, eating her breakfast with her accustomed calmness of demeanor<sup>①</sup> and scarcely glancing at her parents.

She had pleasant and quite regular features, for a girl of fifteen, with dark hair and eyes—the "Merrick eyes," her

---

① demeanor: 风度; 举止