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The Case Against My Brother: A Novel

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It is the fall of 1922. World War I is over, the Jazz Age is beginning, and Americans everywhere fear the spread of Bolshevism.

Orphaned and penniless in Baltimore, Maryland,15-year-old Carl and 17-year-old Adam Matuski are forced to move across the continent to live with their Uncle Pete in Portland, Oregon.

Almost from the beginning, homesick Carl desperately wants to return east with his brother, but his plans come acropper when Adam is sought by police for the theft of expensive jewels from his girlfriend's wealthy home.

Carl, our first-person protagonist, is convinced that Adam is being fingered unfairly. He and his brother are Polish Catholics, and Portland is awash in anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant sentiment. Voters, in fact, are being asked to decide whether Catholic schools, indeed all non-public schools, should be outlawed entirely. Carl works at one such Catholic school. Fueled by the Ku Klux Klan and other unsavory groups, the campaign touches Carl personally as he strives to clear his brother's name and solve the mystery: who really took the family jewels, and why?

Carl's quest forces him to confront the Klan, the local police, and his own fears and insecurities. With the help of a friendly reporter, he follows clues that lead him to a dangerous gambling ring that deals in extortion, blackmail . . . and even murder.

Previously reliant on his older brother for direction and strength, a growingly resourceful Carl learns how to stand on his own two feet and confront painful truths about his fellow man.

The Case Against My Brother is a historical mystery set against the backdrop of the campaign for the Oregon School Question, an anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic referendum in 1922 that outlawed parochial and non-public schools in Oregon. Eventually overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court, the referendum was a sad manifestation of the fear-mongering and paranoia prevalent in post-World War I America.

About the Author:

A Baltimore native, Libby earned both a bachelor's and a master's degree from the Peabody Conservatory of Music and also attended the summer American School of Music in Fontainebleau, France. After graduating from Peabody, she worked as a Spanish gypsy, a Russian courtier, a Middle-Eastern slave, a Japanese geisha, a Chinese peasant, and a French courtesan—that is, she sang as a union chorister in both the Baltimore and Washington Operas, where she regularly had the thrill of walking through the stage doors of the Kennedy Center Opera House in Washington, D.C. before being costumed and wigged for performance. She also sang with small opera and choral companies in the region.

For many years, she and her family lived in Vermont, where she worked as an education reform advocate promoting school choice policies, contributed occasional commentaries to Vermont Public Radio, and was a member of the Vermont Commission on Women.

Libby’s first young adult novel, Uncovering Sadie's Secrets, was a finalist for the prestigious Edgar Allan Poe award from the Mystery Writers of America. The second in her Bianca Balducci mystery series, Finding the Forger, was released in hardcover in November 2004 (both were published as mass-market paperbacks by Smooch), and a third is set for release in 2008. Her debut adult novel, Loves Me, Loves Me Not (published under the name Libby Malin) was released in 2005 to critical acclaim.

She is married, has three children, and lives in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

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