

Wedding

by Jake Barnes

My cousin, the apostate, stood next to the bridegroom and said, "I do." My aunt and uncle were sitting in the pew behind me. Aunt Nora had a fixed smile on her face; Edson looked stricken. He asked me before the wedding where he had gone wrong.

It was cold in the church. The Lutherans were freezing to death. The Catholics brought their winter coats. It was April, but spring hadn't sprung. There was still ice on the lakes.

The service was a disaster. The Protestants bobbed up and down. They didn't know when to stand, when to sit. I watched a couple I knew who were Catholics; I stood when they stood, sat when they sat.

The Protestants stumbled out of the church after the wedding. A few of the men gathered in a tight little circle on the frosty grass to compare notes. Fat Claude wrinkled his nose. "Smells just as bad in their can as it does in ours," he observed. We stood there with our hands in our pockets contemplating that profound truth.

Bald Tommy lowered his voice and whispered: "What you want to bet there's a baby on the way?" He hunched the shoulders of his overcoat and pulled his neck in like a turtle.

