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I meditated pretty freely as I drove down to Brinkley in the old two-seater that afternoon. The news of this rift or rupture of Angela's and Tuppy's had disturbed me greatly.

The projected match, you see, was one on which I had always looked with kindly approval. Too often, when a chap of your acquaintance is planning to marry a girl you know, you find yourself knitting the brow a bit and chewing the lower lip dubiously, feeling that he or she, or both, should be warned while there is yet time.

But I have never felt anything of this nature about Tuppy and Angela. Tuppy, when not making an ass of himself, is a soundish sort of egg. So is Angela a soundish sort of egg. And, as far as being in love was concerned, it had always seemed to me that you wouldn't have been far out in describing them as two hearts that beat as one.

True, they had had their little tiffs, notably on the occasion when Tuppy—with what he said was fearless honesty and I considered thorough goofiness—had told Angela that her new hat made her look like a Pekingese. But in every romance you have to budget for the occasional dust-up, and after that incident I had supposed that he had learned his lesson and that from then on life would be one grand, sweet song.

And now this wholly unforeseen severing of diplomatic relations had popped up through a trap.

I gave the thing the cream of the Wooster brain all the way down, but it continued to beat me what could have caused the outbreak of hostilities, and I binged my foot sedulously on the accelerator in order to get to Aunt Dahlia with the greatest possible speed and learn the inside history straight from the horse's mouth. And what with all six cylinders hitting nicely, I made good time and found myself closeted with the relative shortly before the hour of the evening cocktail.

She seemed glad to see me. In fact, she actually said she was glad to see me—a statement no other aunt on the list would have committed herself to, the customary reaction of these near and dear ones to the spectacle of Bertram arriving for a visit being a sort of sick horror.

"Decent of you to rally round, Bertie," she said.

"My place was by your side, Aunt Dahlia," I responded.

I could see at a g. that the unfortunate affair had got in amongst her in no uncertain manner. Her usually cheerful map was clouded, and the genial smile conspic. by its a. I pressed her hand sympathetically, to indicate that my heart bled for her.

"Bad show this, my dear old flesh and blood," I said. "I'm afraid you've been having a sticky time. You must be worried."

She snorted emotionally. She looked like an aunt who has just bitten into a bad oyster.

"Worried is right. I haven't had a peaceful moment since I got back from Cannes. Ever since I put my foot across this blasted threshold," said Aunt Dahlia, returning for the nonce to the hearty argot of the hunting field, "everything's been at sixes and sevens. First there was that mix-up about the prize-giving."

She paused at this point and gave me a look. "I had been meaning to speak freely to you about your behaviour in that matter, Bertie," she said. "I had some good things all stored up. But, as you've rallied round like this, I suppose I shall have to let you off. And, anyway, it is probably all for the best that you evaded your obligations in that sickeningly craven way. I have an idea that this Spink-Bottle of yours is going to be good. If only he can keep off newts."

"Has he been talking about newts?"

"He has. Fixing me with a glittering eye, like the Ancient Mariner. But if that was the worst I had to bear, I wouldn't mind. What I'm worrying about is what Tom says when he starts talking."

"Uncle Tom?"

"I wish there was something else you could call him except 'Uncle Tom'," said Aunt Dahlia a little testily. "Every time you do it, I expect to see him turn black and start playing the banjo. Yes, Uncle Tom, if you must have it. I shall have to tell him soon about losing all that money at baccarat, and, when I do, he will go up like a rocket."

"Still, no doubt Time, the great healer——"

"Time, the great healer, be blowed. I've got to get a cheque for five hundred pounds out of him for Milady's Boudoir by August the third at the latest."

I was concerned. Apart from a nephew's natural interest in an aunt's refined weekly paper, I had always had a soft spot in my heart for Milady's Boudoir ever since I contributed that article to it on What the Well-Dressed Man is Wearing. Sentimental, possibly, but we old journalists do have these feelings.

"Is the Boudoir on the rocks?"

"It will be if Tom doesn't cough up. It needs help till it has turned the corner."

"But wasn't it turning the corner two years ago?"

"It was. And it's still at it. Till you've run a weekly paper for women, you don't know what corners are."

"And you think the chances of getting into uncle—into my uncle by marriage's ribs are slight?"

"I'll tell you, Bertie. Up till now, when these subsidies were required, I have always been able to come to Tom in the gay, confident spirit of an only child touching an indulgent father for chocolate cream. But he's just had a demand from the income-tax people for an additional fifty-eight pounds, one and threepence, and all he's been talking about since I got back has been ruin and the sinister trend of socialistic legislation and what will become of us all."

I could readily believe it. This Tom has a peculiarity I've noticed in other very oofy men. Nick him for the paltriest sum, and he lets out a squawk you can hear at Land's End. He has the stuff in gobs, but he hates giving up.

"If it wasn't for Anatole's cooking, I doubt if he would bother to carry on. Thank God for Anatole, I say."

I bowed my head reverently.

"Good old Anatole," I said.

"Amen," said Aunt Dahlia.

Then the look of holy ecstasy, which is always the result of letting the mind dwell, however briefly, on Anatole's cooking, died out of her face.

"But don't let me wander from the subject," she resumed. "I was telling you of the way hell's foundations have been quivering since I got home. First the prize-giving, then Tom, and now, on top of everything else, this infernal quarrel between Angela and young Glossop."

I nodded gravely. "I was frightfully sorry to hear of that. Terrible shock. What was the row about?"

"Sharks."

"Eh?"

"Sharks. Or, rather, one individual shark. The brute that went for the poor child when she was aquaplaning at Cannes. You remember Angela's shark?"

Certainly I remembered Angela's shark. A man of sensibility does not forget about a cousin nearly being chewed by monsters of the deep. The episode was still green in my memory.

In a nutshell, what had occurred was this: You know how you aquaplane. A motor-boat nips on ahead, trailing a rope. You stand on a board, holding the rope, and the boat tows you along. And every now and then you lose your grip on the rope and plunge into the sea and have to swim to your board again.

A silly process it has always seemed to me, though many find it diverting.

Well, on the occasion referred to, Angela had just regained her board after taking a toss, when a great beastly shark came along and cannoned into it, flinging her into the salty once more. It took her quite a bit of time to get on again and make the motor-boat chap realize what was up and haul her to safety, and during that interval you can readily picture her embarrassment.

According to Angela, the finny denizen kept snapping at her ankles virtually without cessation, so that by the time help arrived, she was feeling more like a salted almond at a public dinner than anything human. Very shaken the poor child had been, I recall, and had talked of nothing else for weeks.

"I remember the whole incident vividly," I said. "But how did that start the trouble?"

"She was telling him the story last night."

"Well?"

"Her eyes shining and her little hands clasped in girlish excitement."

"No doubt."

"And instead of giving her the understanding and sympathy to which she was entitled, what do you think this blasted Glossop did? He sat listening like a lump of dough, as if she had been talking about the weather, and when she had finished, he took his cigarette holder out of his mouth and said, 'I expect it was only a floating log!'"

"He didn't!"

"He did. And when Angela described how the thing had jumped and snapped at her, he took his cigarette holder out of his mouth again, and said, 'Ah! Probably a flatfish. Quite harmless. No doubt it was just trying to play.' Well, I mean! What would you have done if you had been Angela? She has pride, sensibility, all the natural feelings of a good woman. She told him he was an ass and a fool and an idiot, and didn't know what he was talking about."

I must say I saw the girl's viewpoint. It's only about once in a lifetime that anything sensational ever happens to one, and when it does, you don't want people taking all the colour out of it. I remember at school having to read that stuff where that chap, Othello, tells the girl what a hell of a time he'd been having



among the cannibals and what not. Well, imagine his feelings if, after he had described some particularly sticky passage with a cannibal chief and was waiting for the awestruck "Oh-h! Not really?", she had said that the whole thing had no doubt been greatly exaggerated and that the man had probably really been a prominent local vegetarian.

Yes, I saw Angela's point of view.

"But don't tell me that when he saw how shirty she was about it, the chump didn't back down?"

"He didn't. He argued. And one thing led to another until, by easy stages, they had arrived at the point where she was saying that she didn't know if he was aware of it, but if he didn't knock off starchy foods and do exercises every morning, he would be getting as fat as a pig, and he was talking about this modern habit of girls putting make-up on their faces, of which he had always disapproved. This continued for a while, and then there was a loud pop and the air was full of mangled fragments of their engagement. I'm distracted about it. Thank goodness you've come, Bertie."

"Nothing could have kept me away," I replied, touched. "I felt you needed me."

"Yes."

"Quite."

"Or, rather," she said, "not you, of course, but Jeeves. The minute all this happened, I thought of him. The situation obviously cries out for Jeeves. If ever in the whole history of human affairs there was a moment when that lofty brain was required about the home, this is it."

I think, if I had been standing up, I would have staggered. In fact, I'm pretty sure I would. But it isn't so dashed easy to stagger when you're sitting in an arm-chair. Only my face, therefore, showed how deeply I had been stung by these words.

Until she spoke them, I had been all sweetness and light—the sympathetic nephew prepared to strain every nerve to do his bit. I now froze, and the face became hard and set.

"Jeeves!" I said, between clenched teeth.

"Oom beroofen," said Aunt Dahlia.

I saw that she had got the wrong angle.

"I was not sneezing. I was saying 'Jeeves!'"

"And well you may. What a man! I'm going to put the whole thing up to him. There's nobody like Jeeves."

My frigidity became more marked.

"I venture to take issue with you, Aunt Dahlia."

"You take what?"

"Issue."

"You do, do you?"

"I emphatically do. Jeeves is hopeless."

"What?"

"Quite hopeless. He has lost his grip completely. Only a couple of days ago I was compelled to take him off a case because his handling of it was so footling. And, anyway, I resent this assumption, if assumption is the word I want, that Jeeves is the only fellow with brain. I object to the way everybody puts things up to him without consulting me and letting me have a stab at them first."

She seemed about to speak, but I checked her with a gesture.

"It is true that in the past I have sometimes seen fit to seek Jeeves's advice. It is possible that in the future I may seek it again. But I claim the right to have a pop at these problems, as they arise, in person, without having everybody behave as if Jeeves was the only onion in the hash. I sometimes feel that Jeeves, though admittedly not unsuccessful in the past, has been lucky rather than gifted."

"Have you and Jeeves had a row?"

"Nothing of the kind."

"You seem to have it in for him."

"Not at all."

And yet I must admit that there was a modicum of truth in what she said. I had been feeling pretty austere about the man all day, and I'll tell you why.

You remember that he caught that 12.45 train with the luggage, while I remained on in order to keep a luncheon engagement. Well, just before I started out to the tryst, I was pottering about the flat, and suddenly—I don't know what put the suspicion into my head, possibly the fellow's manner had been furtive—something seemed to whisper to me to go and have a look in the wardrobe.

And it was as I had suspected. There was the mess-jacket still on its hanger. The hound hadn't packed it.

Well, as anybody at the Drones will tell you, Bertram Wooster is a pretty hard chap to outgeneral. I shoved the thing in a brown-paper parcel and put it in the back of the car, and it was on a chair in the hall now. But that didn't alter the fact that Jeeves had attempted to do the dirty on me, and I suppose a certain what-d'you-call-it had crept into my manner during the above remarks.

"There has been no breach," I said. "You might describe it as a passing coolness, but no more. We did not happen to see eye to eye with regard to my white mess-jacket with the brass buttons and I was compelled to assert my personality. But—"

"Well, it doesn't matter, anyway. The thing that matters is that you are talking piffle, you poor fish. Jeeves lost his grip? Absurd. Why, I saw him for a moment when he arrived, and his eyes were absolutely glittering with intelligence. I said to myself 'Trust Jeeves,' and I intend to."

"You would be far better advised to let me see what I can accomplish, Aunt Dahlia."

"For heaven's sake, don't you start butting in. You'll only make matters worse."

"On the contrary, it may interest you to know that while driving here I concentrated deeply on this trouble of Angela's and was successful in formulating a plan, based on the psychology of the individual, which I am proposing to put into effect at an early moment."

"Oh, my God!"

"My knowledge of human nature tells me it will work."

"Bertie," said Aunt Dahlia, and her manner struck me as febrile, "lay off, lay off! For pity's sake, lay off. I know these plans of yours. I suppose you want to shove Angela into the lake and push young Glossop in after her to save her life, or something like that."

"Nothing of the kind."

"It's the sort of thing you would do."

"My scheme is far more subtle. Let me outline it for you."

"No, thanks."

"I say to myself——"

"But not to me."

"Do listen for a second."

"I won't."

"Right ho, then. I am dumb."

"And have been from a child."

I perceived that little good could result from continuing the discussion. I waved a hand and shrugged a shoulder.

"Very well, Aunt Dahlia," I said, with dignity, "if you don't want to be in on the ground floor, that is your affair. But you are missing an intellectual treat. And, anyway, no matter how much you may behave like the deaf adder of Scripture which, as you are doubtless aware, the more one piped, the less it danced, or words to that effect, I shall carry on as planned. I am extremely fond of Angela, and I shall spare no effort to bring the sunshine back into her heart."

"Bertie, you abysmal chump, I appeal to you once more. Will you please lay off? You'll only make things ten times as bad as they are already."

I remember reading in one of those historical novels once about a chap—a buck he would have been, no doubt, or a macaroni or some such bird as that—who, when people said the wrong thing, merely laughed down from lazy eyelids and flicked a speck of dust from the irreproachable Mechlin lace at his wrists. This was practically what I did now. At least, I straightened my tie and smiled one of those inscrutable smiles of mine. I then withdrew and went out for a saunter in the garden.

And the first chap I ran into was young Tuppy. His brow was furrowed, and he was moodily binging stones at a flowerpot.

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