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Tuppy's fatheaded words were still rankling in my bosom as I went up to my room. They continued rankling as I shed the form-fitting, and had not ceased to rankle when, clad in the old dressing-gown, I made my way along the corridor to the salle de bain.

It is not too much to say that I was piqued to the tonsils.

I mean to say, one does not court praise. The adulation of the multitude means very little to one. But, all the same, when one has taken the trouble to whack out a highly juicy scheme to benefit an in-the-soup friend in his hour of travail, it's pretty foul to find him giving the credit to one's personal attendant, particularly if that personal attendant is a man who goes about the place not packing mess-jackets.

But after I had been splashing about in the porcelain for a bit, composure began to return. I have always found that in moments of heart-bowed-downness there is nothing that calms the bruised spirit like a good go at the soap and water. I don't say I actually sang in the tub, but there were times when it was a mere spin of the coin whether I would do so or not.

The spiritual anguish induced by that tactless speech had become noticeably lessened.

The discovery of a toy duck in the soap dish, presumably the property of some former juvenile visitor, contributed not a little to this new and happier frame of mind. What with one thing and another, I hadn't played with toy ducks in my bath for years, and I found the novel experience most invigorating. For the benefit of those interested, I may mention that if you shove the thing under the surface with the sponge and then let it go, it shoots out of the water in a manner calculated to divert the most careworn. Ten minutes of this and I was enabled to return to the bedchamber much more the old merry Bertram.

Jeeves was there, laying out the dinner disguise. He greeted the young master with his customary suavity.

"Good evening, sir."

I responded in the same affable key.

"Good evening, Jeeves."

"I trust you had a pleasant drive, sir."

"Very pleasant, thank you, Jeeves. Hand me a sock or two, will you?"

He did so, and I commenced to don,

"Well, Jeeves," I said, reaching for the underlinen, "here we are again at Brinkley Court in the county of Worcestershire."

"Yes, sir."

"A nice mess things seem to have gone and got themselves into in this rustic joint."

"Yes, sir."

"The rift between Tuppy Glossop and my cousin Angela would appear to be serious."

"Yes, sir. Opinion in the servants' hall is inclined to take a grave view of the situation."

"And the thought that springs to your mind, no doubt, is that I shall have my work cut out to fix things up?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are wrong, Jeeves. I have the thing well in hand."

"You surprise me, sir."

"I thought I should. Yes, Jeeves, I pondered on the matter most of the way down here, and with the happiest results. I have just been in conference with Mr. Glossop, and everything is taped out."

"Indeed, sir? Might I inquire——"

"You know my methods, Jeeves. Apply them. Have you," I asked, slipping into the shirt and starting to adjust the cravat, "been gnawing on the thing at all?"

"Oh, yes, sir. I have always been much attached to Miss Angela, and I felt that it would afford me great pleasure were I to be able to be of service to her."

"A laudable sentiment. But I suppose you drew blank?"

"No, sir. I was rewarded with an idea."

"What was it?"

"It occurred to me that a reconciliation might be effected between Mr. Glossop and Miss Angela by appealing to that instinct which prompts gentlemen in time of peril to hasten to the rescue of——"

I had to let go of the cravat in order to raise a hand. I was shocked.

"Don't tell me you were contemplating descending to that old he-saved-her-from-drowning gag? I am surprised, Jeeves. Surprised and pained. When I was discussing the matter with Aunt Dahlia on my arrival, she said in a sniffy sort of way that she supposed I was going to shove my Cousin Angela into the lake and push Tuppy in to haul her out, and I let her see pretty clearly that I considered the suggestion an insult to my intelligence. And now, if your words have the meaning I read into them, you are mooted precisely the same drivelling scheme. Really, Jeeves!"

"No, sir. Not that. But the thought did cross my mind, as I walked in the grounds and passed the building where the fire-bell hangs, that a sudden alarm of fire in the night might result in Mr. Glossop endeavouring to assist Miss Angela to safety."

I shivered.

"Rotten, Jeeves."

"Well, sir——"

"No good. Not a bit like it."

"I fancy, sir——"

"No, Jeeves. No more. Enough has been said. Let us drop the subj."

I finished tying the tie in silence. My emotions were too deep for speech. I knew, of course, that this man had for the time being lost his grip, but I had never suspected that he had gone absolutely to pieces like this. Remembering some of the swift ones he had pulled in the past, I shrank with horror from the spectacle of his present ineptitude. Or is it ineptness? I mean this frightful disposition of his to stick straws in his hair and talk like a perfect ass. It was the old, old story, I supposed. A man's brain whizzes along for years exceeding the speed limit, and something suddenly goes wrong with the steering-gear and it skids and comes a smeller in the ditch.

"A bit elaborate," I said, trying to put the thing in as kindly a light as possible.

"Your old failing. You can see that it's a bit elaborate?"

"Possibly the plan I suggested might be considered open to that criticism, sir, but *faute de mieux*—"

"I don't get you, Jeeves."

"A French expression, sir, signifying 'for want of anything better'."

A moment before, I had been feeling for this wreck of a once fine thinker nothing but a gentle pity. These words jarred the Wooster pride, inducing asperity.

"I understand perfectly well what *faute de mieux* means, Jeeves. I did not recently spend two months among our Gallic neighbours for nothing. Besides, I remember that one from school. What caused my bewilderment was that you should be employing the expression, well knowing that there is no bally *faute de mieux* about it at all. Where do you get that *faute-de-mieux* stuff? Didn't I tell you I had everything taped out?"

"Yes, sir, but——"

"What do you mean—but?"

"Well, sir——"

"Push on, Jeeves. I am ready, even anxious, to hear your views."

"Well, sir, if I may take the liberty of reminding you of it, your plans in the past have not always been uniformly successful."

There was a silence—rather a throbbing one—during which I put on my waistcoat in a marked manner. Not till I had got the buckle at the back satisfactorily adjusted did I speak.

"It is true, Jeeves," I said formally, "that once or twice in the past I may have missed the bus. This, however, I attribute purely to bad luck."

"Indeed, sir?"

"On the present occasion I shall not fail, and I'll tell you why I shall not fail. Because my scheme is rooted in human nature."

"Indeed, sir?"

"It is simple. Not elaborate. And, furthermore, based on the psychology of the individual."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Jeeves," I said, "don't keep saying 'Indeed, sir?' No doubt nothing is further from your mind than to convey such a suggestion, but you have a way of stressing the 'in' and then coming down with a thud on the 'deed' which makes it virtually tantamount to 'Oh, yeah?' Correct this, Jeeves."

"Very good, sir."



"I tell you I have everything nicely lined up. Would you care to hear what steps I have taken?"

"Very much, sir."

"Then listen. Tonight at dinner I have recommended Tuppy to lay off the food."

"Sir?"

"Tut, Jeeves, surely you can follow the idea, even though it is one that would never have occurred to yourself. Have you forgotten that telegram I sent to Gussie Fink-Nottle, steering him away from the sausages and ham? This is the same thing. Pushing the food away untasted is a universally recognized sign of love. It cannot fail to bring home the gravy. You must see that?"

"Well, sir——"

I frowned.

"I don't want to seem always to be criticizing your methods of voice production, Jeeves," I said, "but I must inform you that that 'Well, sir' of yours is in many respects fully as unpleasant as your 'Indeed, sir?' Like the latter, it seems to be tinged with a definite scepticism. It suggests a lack of faith in my vision. The impression I retain after hearing you shoot it at me a couple of times is that you

consider me to be talking through the back of my neck, and that only a feudal sense of what is fitting restrains you from substituting for it the words 'Says you!'"

"Oh, no, sir."

"Well, that's what it sounds like. Why don't you think this scheme will work?"

"I fear Miss Angela will merely attribute Mr. Glossop's abstinence to indigestion, sir."

I hadn't thought of that, and I must confess it shook me for a moment. Then I recovered myself. I saw what was at the bottom of all this. Mortified by the consciousness of his own ineptness—or ineptitude—the fellow was simply trying to hamper and obstruct. I decided to knock the stuffing out of him without further preamble.

"Oh?" I said. "You do, do you? Well, be that as it may, it doesn't alter the fact that you've put out the wrong coat. Be so good, Jeeves," I said, indicating with a gesture the gent's ordinary dinner jacket or smoking, as we call it on the Côte d'Azur, which was suspended from the hanger on the knob of the wardrobe, "as to shove that bally black thing in the cupboard and bring out my white mess-jacket with the brass buttons."

He looked at me in a meaning manner. And when I say a meaning manner, I mean there was a respectful but at the same time uppish glint in his eye and a sort of muscular spasm flickered across his face which wasn't quite a quiet smile and yet wasn't quite not a quiet smile. Also the soft cough.

"I regret to say, sir, that I inadvertently omitted to pack the garment to which you refer."

The vision of that parcel in the hall seemed to rise before my eyes, and I exchanged a merry wink with it. I may even have hummed a bar or two. I'm not quite sure.

"I know you did, Jeeves," I said, laughing down from lazy eyelids and nicking a speck of dust from the irreproachable Mechlin lace at my wrists. "But I didn't. You will find it on a chair in the hall in a brown-paper parcel."

The information that his low manoeuvres had been rendered null and void and that the thing was on the strength after all, must have been the nastiest of jars, but there was no play of expression on his finely chiselled to indicate it. There very seldom is on Jeeves's f-c. In moments of discomfort, as I had told Tuppy, he wears a mask, preserving throughout the quiet stolidity of a stuffed moose.

"You might just slide down and fetch it, will you?"

"Very good, sir."

"Right ho, Jeeves."

And presently I was sauntering towards the drawing-room with me good old j. nestling snugly abaft the shoulder blades.

And Dahlia was in the drawing-room. She glanced up at my entrance.

"Hullo, eyesore," she said. "What do you think you're made up as?"

I did not get the purport.

"The jacket, you mean?" I queried, groping.

"I do. You look like one of the chorus of male guests at Abernethy Towers in Act 2 of a touring musical comedy."

"You do not admire this jacket?"

"I do not."

"You did at Cannes."

"Well, this isn't Cannes."

"But, dash it——"

"Oh, never mind. Let it go. If you want to give my butler a laugh, what does it matter? What does anything matter now?"

There was a death-where-is-thy-sting-fullness about her manner which I found distasteful. It isn't often that I score off Jeeves in the devastating fashion just described, and when I do I like to see happy, smiling faces about me.

"Tails up, Aunt Dahlia," I urged buoyantly.

"Tails up be dashed," was her sombre response. "I've just been talking to Tom."

"Telling him?"

"No, listening to him. I haven't had the nerve to tell him yet."

"Is he still upset about that income-tax money?"

"Upset is right. He says that Civilisation is in the melting-pot and that all thinking men can read the writing on the wall."

"What wall?"

"Old Testament, ass. Belshazzar's feast."

"Oh, that, yes. I've often wondered how that gag was worked. With mirrors, I expect."

"I wish I could use mirrors to break it to Tom about this baccarat business."

I had a word of comfort to offer here. I had been turning the thing over in my mind since our last meeting, and I thought I saw where she had got twisted. Where she made her error, it seemed to me, was in feeling she had got to tell Uncle Tom. To my way of thinking, the matter was one on which it would be better to continue to exercise a quiet reserve.

"I don't see why you need mention that you lost that money at baccarat."

"What do you suggest, then? Letting Milady's Boudoir join Civilisation in the melting-pot. Because that is what it will infallibly do unless I get a cheque by next week. The printers have been showing a nasty spirit for months."

"You don't follow. Listen. It's an understood thing, I take it, that Uncle Tom foots the Boudoir bills. If the bally sheet has been turning the corner for two years, he

must have got used to forking out by this time. Well, simply ask him for the money to pay the printers."

"I did. Just before I went to Cannes."

"Wouldn't he give it to you?"

"Certainly he gave it to me. He brassed up like an officer and a gentleman. That was the money I lost at baccarat."

"Oh? I didn't know that."

"There isn't much you do know."

A nephew's love made me overlook the slur.

"Tut!" I said.

"What did you say?"

"I said 'Tut!'"

"Say it once again, and I'll biff you where you stand. I've enough to endure without being tutted at."

"Quite."

"Any tutting that's required, I'll attend to myself. And the same applies to clicking the tongue, if you were thinking of doing that."

"Far from it."

"Good."

I stood awhile in thought. I was concerned to the core. My heart, if you remember, had already bled once for Aunt Dahlia this evening. It now bled again. I knew how deeply attached she was to this paper of hers. Seeing it go down the drain would be for her like watching a loved child sink for the third time in some pond or mere.

And there was no question that, unless carefully prepared for the touch, Uncle Tom would see a hundred Milady's Boudoirs go phut rather than take the rap.

Then I saw how the thing could be handled. This aunt, I perceived, must fall into line with my other clients. Tuppy Glossop was knocking off dinner to melt Angela. Gussie Fink-Nottle was knocking off dinner to impress the Bassett. Aunt Dahlia must knock off dinner to soften Uncle Tom. For the beauty of this scheme of mine



was that there was no limit to the number of entrants. Come one, come all, the more the merrier, and satisfaction guaranteed in every case.

"I've got it," I said. "There is only one course to pursue. Eat less meat."

She looked at me in a pleading sort of way. I wouldn't swear that her eyes were wet with unshed tears, but I rather think they were, certainly she clasped her hands in piteous appeal.

"Must you drivel, Bertie? Won't you stop it just this once? Just for tonight, to please Aunt Dahlia?"

"I'm not drivelling."

"I dare say that to a man of your high standards it doesn't come under the head of drivel, but——"

I saw what had happened. I hadn't made myself quite clear.

"It's all right," I said. "Have no misgivings. This is the real Tabasco. When I said 'Eat less meat', what I meant was that you must refuse your oats at dinner tonight. Just sit there, looking blistered, and wave away each course as it comes with a weary gesture of resignation. You see what will happen. Uncle Tom will notice your loss of appetite, and I am prepared to bet that at the conclusion of the

meal he will come to you and say 'Dahlia, darling'—I take it he calls you 'Dahlia'—'Dahlia darling,' he will say, 'I noticed at dinner tonight that you were a bit off your feed. Is anything the matter, Dahlia, darling?' 'Why, yes, Tom, darling,' you will reply. 'It is kind of you to ask, darling. The fact is, darling, I am terribly worried.' 'My darling,' he will say——"

Aunt Dahlia interrupted at this point to observe that these Traverses seemed to be a pretty sappy couple of blighters, to judge by their dialogue. She also wished to know when I was going to get to the point.

I gave her a look.

"'My darling,' he will say tenderly, 'is there anything I can do?' To which your reply will be that there jolly well is—viz. reach for his cheque-book and start writing."

I was watching her closely as I spoke, and was pleased to note respect suddenly dawn in her eyes.

"But, Bertie, this is positively bright."

"I told you Jeeves wasn't the only fellow with brain."

"I believe it would work."

"It's bound to work. I've recommended it to Tuppy."

"Young Glossop?"

"In order to soften Angela."

"Splendid!"

"And to Gussie Fink-Nottle, who wants to make a hit with the Bassett."

"Well, well, well! What a busy little brain it is."

"Always working, Aunt Dahlia, always working."

"You're not the chump I took you for, Bertie."

"When did you ever take me for a chump?"

"Oh, some time last summer. I forget what gave me the idea. Yes, Bertie, this scheme is bright. I suppose, as a matter of fact, Jeeves suggested it."

"Jeeves did not suggest it. I resent these implications. Jeeves had nothing to do with it whatsoever."

"Well, all right, no need to get excited about it. Yes, I think it will work. Tom's devoted to me."

"Who wouldn't be?"

"I'll do it."

And then the rest of the party trickled in, and we toddled down to dinner.

Conditions being as they were at Brinkley Court—I mean to say, the place being loaded down above the Plimsoll mark with aching hearts and standing room only as regarded tortured souls—I hadn't expected the evening meal to be particularly effervescent. Nor was it. Silent. Sombre. The whole thing more than a bit like Christmas dinner on Devil's Island.

I was glad when it was over.

What with having, on top of her other troubles, to rein herself back from the trough, Aunt Dahlia was a total loss as far as anything in the shape of brilliant badinage was concerned. The fact that he was fifty quid in the red and expecting Civilisation to take a toss at any moment had caused Uncle Tom, who always looked a bit like a pterodactyl with a secret sorrow, to take on a deeper melancholy. The Bassett was a silent bread crumbler. Angela might have been

hewn from the living rock. Tuppy had the air of a condemned murderer refusing to make the usual hearty breakfast before tooling off to the execution shed.

And as for Gussie Fink-Nottle, many an experienced undertaker would have been deceived by his appearance and started embalming him on sight.

This was the first glimpse I had had of Gussie since we parted at my flat, and I must say his demeanour disappointed me. I had been expecting something a great deal more sparkling.

At my flat, on the occasion alluded to, he had, if you recall, practically given me a signed guarantee that all he needed to touch him off was a rural setting. Yet in this aspect now I could detect no indication whatsoever that he was about to round into mid-season form. He still looked like a cat in an adage, and it did not take me long to realise that my very first act on escaping from this morgue must be to draw him aside and give him a pep talk.

If ever a chap wanted the clarion note, it looked as if it was this Fink-Nottle.

In the general exodus of mourners, however, I lost sight of him, and, owing to the fact that Aunt Dahlia roped me in for a game of backgammon, it was not immediately that I was able to institute a search. But after we had been playing for a while, the butler came in and asked her if she would speak to Anatole, so I managed to get away. And some ten minutes later, having failed to find scent in

the house, I started to throw out the drag-net through the grounds, and flushed him in the rose garden.

He was smelling a rose at the moment in a limp sort of way, but removed the beak as I approached.

"Well, Gussie," I said.

I had beamed genially upon him as I spoke, such being my customary policy on meeting an old pal; but instead of beaming back genially, he gave me a most unpleasant look. His attitude perplexed me. It was as if he were not glad to see Bertram. For a moment he stood letting this unpleasant look play upon me, as it were, and then he spoke.

"You and your 'Well, Gussie!'"

He said this between clenched teeth, always an unmatey thing to do, and I found myself more fogged than ever.

"How do you mean—me and my 'Well, Gussie'?"

"I like your nerve, coming bounding about the place, saying 'Well, Gussie.' That's about all the 'Well, Gussie' I shall require from you, Wooster. And it's no good looking like that. You know what I mean. That damned prize-giving! It was a

dastardly act to crawl out as you did and shove it off on to me. I will not mince my words. It was the act of a hound and a stinker."

Now, though, as I have shown, I had devoted most of the time on the journey down to meditating upon the case of Angela and Tuppy, I had not neglected to give a thought or two to what I was going to say when I encountered Gussie. I had foreseen that there might be some little temporary unpleasantness when we met, and when a difficult interview is in the offing Bertram Wooster likes to have his story ready.

So now I was able to reply with a manly, disarming frankness. The sudden introduction of the topic had given me a bit of a jolt, it is true, for in the stress of recent happenings I had rather let that prize-giving business slide to the back of my mind; but I had speedily recovered and, as I say, was able to reply with a manly d.f.

"But, my dear chap," I said, "I took it for granted that you would understand that that was all part of my schemes."

He said something about my schemes which I did not catch.

"Absolutely. 'Crawling out' is entirely the wrong way to put it. You don't suppose I didn't want to distribute those prizes, do you? Left to myself, there is nothing I would find a greater treat. But I saw that the square, generous thing to do was to

step aside and let you take it on, so I did so. I felt that your need was greater than mine. You don't mean to say you aren't looking forward to it?"

He uttered a coarse expression which I wouldn't have thought he would have known. It just shows that you can bury yourself in the country and still somehow acquire a vocabulary. No doubt one picks up things from the neighbours—the vicar, the local doctor, the man who brings the milk, and so on.

"But, dash it," I said, "can't you see what this is going to do for you? It will send your stock up with a jump. There you will be, up on that platform, a romantic, impressive figure, the star of the whole proceedings, the what-d'you-call-it of all eyes. Madeline Bassett will be all over you. She will see you in a totally new light."

"She will, will she?"

"Certainly she will. Augustus Fink-Nottle, the newts' friend, she knows. She is acquainted with Augustus Fink-Nottle, the dogs' chiropodist. But Augustus Fink-Nottle, the orator—that'll knock her sideways, or I know nothing of the female heart. Girls go potty over a public man. If ever anyone did anyone else a kindness, it was I when I gave this extraordinary attractive assignment to you."

He seemed impressed by my eloquence. Couldn't have helped himself, of course. The fire faded from behind his horn-rimmed spectacles, and in its place appeared the old fish-like goggle.



"Myes," he said meditatively. "Have you ever made a speech, Bertie?"

"Dozens of times. It's pie. Nothing to it. Why, I once addressed a girls' school."

"You weren't nervous?"

"Not a bit."

"How did you go?"

"They hung on my lips. I held them in the hollow of my hand."

"They didn't throw eggs, or anything?"

"Not a thing."

He expelled a deep breath, and for a space stood staring in silence at a passing slug.

"Well," he said, at length, "it may be all right. Possibly I am letting the thing prey on my mind too much. I may be wrong in supposing it the fate that is worse than death. But I'll tell you this much: the prospect of that prize-giving on the thirty-first of this month has been turning my existence into a nightmare. I haven't been

able to sleep or think or eat ... By the way, that reminds me. You never explained that cipher telegram about the sausages and ham."

"It wasn't a cipher telegram. I wanted you to go light on the food, so that she would realize you were in love."

He laughed hollowly.

"I see. Well, I've been doing that, all right."

"Yes, I was noticing at dinner. Splendid."

"I don't see what's splendid about it. It's not going to get me anywhere. I shall never be able to ask her to marry me. I couldn't find nerve to do that if I lived on wafer biscuits for the rest of my life."

"But, dash it, Gussie. In these romantic surroundings. I should have thought the whispering trees alone——"

"I don't care what you would have thought. I can't do it."

"Oh, come!"

"I can't. She seems so aloof, so remote."

"She doesn't."

"Yes, she does. Especially when you see her sideways. Have you seen her sideways, Bertie? That cold, pure profile. It just takes all the heart out of one."

"It doesn't."

"I tell you it does. I catch sight of it, and the words freeze on my lips."

He spoke with a sort of dull despair, and so manifest was his lack of ginger and the spirit that wins to success that for an instant, I confess, I felt a bit stymied. It seemed hopeless to go on trying to steam up such a human jellyfish. Then I saw the way. With that extraordinary quickness of mine, I realized exactly what must be done if this Fink-Nottle was to be enabled to push his nose past the judges' box.

"She must be softened up," I said.

"Be what?"

"Softened up. Sweetened. Worked on. Preliminary spadework must be put in. Here, Gussie, is the procedure I propose to adopt: I shall now return to the house and lug this Bassett out for a stroll. I shall talk to her of hearts that yearn,

intimating that there is one actually on the premises. I shall pitch it strong, sparing no effort. You, meanwhile, will lurk on the outskirts, and in about a quarter of an hour you will come along and carry on from there. By that time, her emotions having been stirred, you ought to be able to do the rest on your head. It will be like leaping on to a moving bus."

I remember when I was a kid at school having to learn a poem of sorts about a fellow named Pig-something—a sculptor he would have been, no doubt—who made a statue of a girl, and what should happen one morning but that the bally thing suddenly came to life. A pretty nasty shock for the chap, of course, but the point I'm working round to is that there were a couple of lines that went, if I remember correctly:

She starts. She moves. She seems to feel The stir of life along her keel.

And what I'm driving at is that you couldn't get a better description of what happened to Gussie as I spoke these heartening words. His brow cleared, his eyes brightened, he lost that fishy look, and he gazed at the slug, which was still on the long, long trail with something approaching bonhomie. A marked improvement.

"I see what you mean. You will sort of pave the way, as it were."

"That's right. Spadework."

"It's a terrific idea, Bertie. It will make all the difference."

"Quite. But don't forget that after that it will be up to you. You will have to haul up your slacks and give her the old oil, or my efforts will have been in vain."

Something of his former Gawd-help-us-ness seemed to return to him. He gasped a bit.

"That's true. What the dickens shall I say?"

I restrained my impatience with an effort. The man had been at school with me.

"Dash it, there are hundreds of things you can say. Talk about the sunset."

"The sunset?"

"Certainly. Half the married men you meet began by talking about the sunset."

"But what can I say about the sunset?"

"Well, Jeeves got off a good one the other day. I met him airing the dog in the park one evening, and he said, 'Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight, sir, and all the air a solemn stillness holds.' You might use that."

"What sort of landscape?"

"Glimmering. G for 'gastritis,' l for 'lizard'——"

"Oh, glimmering? Yes, that's not bad. Glimmering landscape ... solemn stillness.... Yes, I call that pretty good."

"You could then say that you have often thought that the stars are God's daisy chain."

"But I haven't."

"I dare say not. But she has. Hand her that one, and I don't see how she can help feeling that you're a twin soul."

"God's daisy chain?"

"God's daisy chain. And then you go on about how twilight always makes you sad. I know you're going to say it doesn't, but on this occasion it has jolly well got to."

"Why?"

"That's just what she will ask, and you will then have got her going. Because you will reply that it is because yours is such a lonely life. It wouldn't be a bad idea to give her a brief description of a typical home evening at your Lincolnshire residence, showing how you pace the meadows with a heavy tread."

"I generally sit indoors and listen to the wireless."

"No, you don't. You pace the meadows with a heavy tread, wishing that you had someone to love you. And then you speak of the day when she came into your life."

"Like a fairy princess."

"Absolutely," I said with approval. I hadn't expected such a hot one from such a quarter. "Like a fairy princess. Nice work, Gussie."

"And then?"

"Well, after that it's easy. You say you have something you want to say to her, and then you snap into it. I don't see how it can fail. If I were you, I should do it in this rose garden. It is well established that there is no sounder move than to steer the adored object into rose gardens in the gloaming. And you had better have a couple of quick ones first."

"Quick ones?"

"Snifters."

"Drinks, do you mean? But I don't drink."

"What?"

"I've never touched a drop in my life."

This made me a bit dubious, I must confess. On these occasions it is generally conceded that a moderate skinful is of the essence.

However, if the facts were as he had stated, I supposed there was nothing to be done about it.

"Well, you'll have to make out as best you can on ginger pop."

"I always drink orange juice."

"Orange juice, then. Tell me, Gussie, to settle a bet, do you really like that muck?"

"Very much."



"Then there is no more to be said. Now, let's just have a run through, to see that you've got the lay-out straight. Start off with the glimmering landscape."

"Stars God's daisy chain."

"Twilight makes you feel sad."

"Because mine lonely life."

"Describe life."

"Talk about the day I met her."

"Add fairy-princess gag. Say there's something you want to say to her. Heave a couple of sighs. Grab her hand. And give her the works. Right."

And confident that he had grasped the scenario and that everything might now be expected to proceed through the proper channels, I picked up the feet and hastened back to the house.

It was not until I had reached the drawing-room and was enabled to take a square look at the Bassett that I found the debonair gaiety with which I had embarked on this affair beginning to wane a trifle. Beholding her at close range like this, I suddenly became cognisant of what I was in for. The thought of

strolling with this rummy specimen undeniably gave me a most unpleasant sinking feeling. I could not but remember how often, when in her company at Cannes, I had gazed dumbly at her, wishing that some kindly motorist in a racing car would ease the situation by coming along and ramming her amidships. As I have already made abundantly clear, this girl was not one of my most congenial buddies.

However, a Wooster's word is his bond. Woosters may quail, but they do not edge out. Only the keenest ear could have detected the tremor in the voice as I asked her if she would care to come out for half an hour.

"Lovely evening," I said.

"Yes, lovely, isn't it?"

"Lovely. Reminds me of Cannes."

"How lovely the evenings were there!"

"Lovely," I said.

"Lovely," said the Bassett.

"Lovely," I agreed.

That completed the weather and news bulletin for the French Riviera. Another minute, and we were out in the great open spaces, she cooing a bit about the scenery, and self replying, "Oh, rather, quite," and wondering how best to approach the matter in hand.

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