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"Jeeves," I said.

"Sir?"

"I've just been having a chat with young Tuppy, Jeeves. Did you happen to notice that he wasn't looking very roguish this morning?"

"Yes, sir. It seemed to me that Mr. Glossop's face was sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought."

"Quite. He met my cousin Angela in the larder last night, and a rather painful interview ensued."

"I am sorry, sir."

"Not half so sorry as he was. She found him closeted with a steak-and-kidney pie, and appears to have been a bit caustic about fat men who lived for food alone."

"Most disturbing, sir."

"Very. In fact, many people would say that things had gone so far between these two nothing now could bridge the chasm. A girl who could make cracks about human pythons who ate nine or ten meals a day and ought to be careful not to

hurry upstairs because of the danger of apoplectic fits is a girl, many people would say, in whose heart love is dead. Wouldn't people say that, Jeeves?"

"Undeniably, sir."

"They would be wrong."

"You think so, sir?"

"I am convinced of it. I know these females. You can't go by what they say."

"You feel that Miss Angela's strictures should not be taken too much au pied de la lettre, sir?"

"Eh?"

"In English, we should say 'literally'."

"Literally. That's exactly what I mean. You know what girls are. A tiff occurs, and they shoot their heads off. But underneath it all the old love still remains. Am I correct?"

"Quite correct, sir. The poet Scott——"

"Right ho, Jeeves."

"Very good, sir."

"And in order to bring that old love whizzing to the surface once more, all that is required is the proper treatment."

"By 'proper treatment,' sir, you mean——"

"Clever handling, Jeeves. A spot of the good old snaky work. I see what must be done to jerk my Cousin Angela back to normalcy. I'll tell you, shall I?"

"If you would be so kind, sir."

I lit a cigarette, and eyed him keenly through the smoke. He waited respectfully for me to unleash the words of wisdom. I must say for Jeeves that—till, as he is so apt to do, he starts shoving his oar in and cavilling and obstructing—he makes a very good audience. I don't know if he is actually agog, but he looks agog, and that's the great thing.

"Suppose you were strolling through the illimitable jungle, Jeeves, and happened to meet a tiger cub."

"The contingency is a remote one, sir."

"Never mind. Let us suppose it."

"Very good, sir."

"Let us now suppose that you sloshed that tiger cub, and let us suppose further that word reached its mother that it was being put upon. What would you expect the attitude of that mother to be? In what frame of mind do you consider that that tigress would approach you?"

"I should anticipate a certain show of annoyance, sir."

"And rightly. Due to what is known as the maternal instinct, what?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good, Jeeves. We will now suppose that there has recently been some little coolness between this tiger cub and this tigress. For some days, let us say, they have not been on speaking terms. Do you think that that would make any difference to the vim with which the latter would leap to the former's aid?"

"No, sir."

"Exactly. Here, then, in brief, is my plan, Jeeves. I am going to draw my Cousin Angela aside to a secluded spot and roast Tuppy properly."

"Roast, sir?"

"Knock. Slam. Tick-off. Abuse. Denounce. I shall be very terse about Tuppy, giving it as my opinion that in all essentials he is more like a wart hog than an ex-member of a fine old English public school. What will ensue? Hearing him attacked, my Cousin Angela's womanly heart will be as sick as mud. The maternal tigress in her will awake. No matter what differences they may have had, she will remember only that he is the man she loves, and will leap to his defence. And from that to falling into his arms and burying the dead past will be but a step. How do you react to that?"

"The idea is an ingenious one, sir."

"We Woosters are ingenious, Jeeves, exceedingly ingenious."

"Yes, sir."

"As a matter of fact, I am not speaking without a knowledge of the form book. I have tested this theory."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Yes, in person. And it works. I was standing on the Eden rock at Antibes last month, idly watching the bathers disport themselves in the water, and a girl I knew slightly pointed at a male diver and asked me if I didn't think his legs were about the silliest-looking pair of props ever issued to human being. I replied that I did, indeed, and for the space of perhaps two minutes was extraordinarily witty and satirical about this bird's underpinning. At the end of that period, I suddenly felt as if I had been caught up in the tail of a cyclone.

"Beginning with a critique of my own limbs, which she said, justly enough, were nothing to write home about, this girl went on to dissect my manners, morals, intellect, general physique, and method of eating asparagus with such acerbity that by the time she had finished the best you could say of Bertram was that, so far as was known, he had never actually committed murder or set fire to an orphan asylum. Subsequent investigation proved that she was engaged to the fellow with the legs and had had a slight disagreement with him the evening before on the subject of whether she should or should not have made an original call of two spades, having seven, but without the ace. That night I saw them dining together with every indication of relish, their differences made up and the lovelight once more in their eyes. That shows you, Jeeves."

"Yes, sir."

"I expect precisely similar results from my Cousin Angela when I start roasting Tuppy. By lunchtime, I should imagine, the engagement will be on again and the diamond-and-platinum ring glittering as of yore on her third finger. Or is it the fourth?"

"Scarcely by luncheon time, sir. Miss Angela's maid informs me that Miss Angela drove off in her car early this morning with the intention of spending the day with friends in the vicinity."

"Well, within half an hour of whatever time she comes back, then. These are mere straws, Jeeves. Do not let us chop them."

"No, sir."

"The point is that, as far as Tuppy and Angela are concerned, we may say with confidence that everything will shortly be hotsy-totsy once more. And what an agreeable thought that is, Jeeves."

"Very true, sir."

"If there is one thing that gives me the pip, it is two loving hearts being estranged."

"I can readily appreciate the fact, sir."

I placed the stub of my gasper in the ash tray and lit another, to indicate that that completed Chap. I.

"Right ho, then. So much for the western front. We now turn to the eastern."

"Sir?"

"I speak in parables, Jeeves. What I mean is, we now approach the matter of Gussie and Miss Bassett."

"Yes, sir."

"Here, Jeeves, more direct methods are required. In handling the case of Augustus Fink-Nottle, we must keep always in mind the fact that we are dealing with a poop."

"A sensitive plant would, perhaps, be a kinder expression, sir."

"No, Jeeves, a poop. And with poops one has to employ the strong, forceful, straightforward policy. Psychology doesn't get you anywhere. You, if I may remind you without wounding your feelings, fell into the error of mucking about with psychology in connection with this Fink-Nottle, and the result was a wash-out. You attempted to push him over the line by rigging him out in a Mephistopheles



costume and sending him off to a fancy-dress ball, your view being that scarlet tights would embolden him. Futile."

"The matter was never actually put to the test, sir."

"No. Because he didn't get to the ball. And that strengthens my argument. A man who can set out in a cab for a fancy-dress ball and not get there is manifestly a poop of no common order. I don't think I have ever known anybody else who was such a dashed silly ass that he couldn't even get to a fancy-dress ball. Have you, Jeeves?"

"No, sir."

"But don't forget this, because it is the point I wish, above all, to make: Even if Gussie had got to that ball; even if those scarlet tights, taken in conjunction with his horn-rimmed spectacles, hadn't given the girl a fit of some kind; even if she had rallied from the shock and he had been able to dance and generally hobnob with her; even then your efforts would have been fruitless, because, Mephistopheles costume or no Mephistopheles costume, Augustus Fink-Nottle would never have been able to summon up the courage to ask her to be his. All that would have resulted would have been that she would have got that lecture on newts a few days earlier. And why, Jeeves? Shall I tell you why?"

"Yes, sir."

"Because he would have been attempting the hopeless task of trying to do the thing on orange juice."

"Sir?"

"Gussie is an orange-juice addict. He drinks nothing else."

"I was not aware of that, sir."

"I have it from his own lips. Whether from some hereditary taint, or because he promised his mother he wouldn't, or simply because he doesn't like the taste of the stuff, Gussie Fink-Nottle has never in the whole course of his career pushed so much as the simplest gin and tonic over the larynx. And he expects—this poop expects, Jeeves—this wabbling, shrinking, diffident rabbit in human shape expects under these conditions to propose to the girl he loves. One hardly knows whether to smile or weep, what?"

"You consider total abstinence a handicap to a gentleman who wishes to make a proposal of marriage, sir?"

The question amazed me.

"Why, dash it," I said, astounded, "you must know it is. Use your intelligence, Jeeves. Reflect what proposing means. It means that a decent, self-respecting chap has got to listen to himself saying things which, if spoken on the silver screen, would cause him to dash to the box-office and demand his money back. Let him attempt to do it on orange juice, and what ensues? Shame seals his lips, or, if it doesn't do that, makes him lose his morale and start to babble. Gussie, for example, as we have seen, babbles of syncopated newts."

"Palmated newts, sir."

"Palmated or syncopated, it doesn't matter which. The point is that he babbles and is going to babble again, if he has another try at it. Unless—and this is where I want you to follow me very closely, Jeeves—unless steps are taken at once through the proper channels. Only active measures, promptly applied, can provide this poor, pusillanimous poop with the proper pep. And that is why, Jeeves, I intend tomorrow to secure a bottle of gin and lace his luncheon orange juice with it liberally."

"Sir?"

I clicked the tongue.

"I have already had occasion, Jeeves," I said rebukingly, "to comment on the way you say 'Well, sir' and 'Indeed, sir?' I take this opportunity of informing you that I

object equally strongly to your 'Sir?' pure and simple. The word seems to suggest that in your opinion I have made a statement or mooted a scheme so bizarre that your brain reels at it. In the present instance, there is absolutely nothing to say 'Sir?' about. The plan I have put forward is entirely reasonable and icily logical, and should excite no serring whatsoever. Or don't you think so?"

"Well, sir——"

"Jeeves!"

"I beg your pardon, sir. The expression escaped me inadvertently. What I intended to say, since you press me, was that the action which you propose does seem to me somewhat injudicious."

"Injudicious? I don't follow you, Jeeves."

"A certain amount of risk would enter into it, in my opinion, sir. It is not always a simple matter to gauge the effect of alcohol on a subject unaccustomed to such stimulant. I have known it to have distressing results in the case of parrots."

"Parrots?"

"I was thinking of an incident of my earlier life, sir, before I entered your employment. I was in the service of the late Lord Brancaster at the time, a

gentleman who owned a parrot to which he was greatly devoted, and one day the bird chanced to be lethargic, and his lordship, with the kindly intention of restoring it to its customary animation, offered it a portion of seed cake steeped in the '84 port. The bird accepted the morsel gratefully and consumed it with every indication of satisfaction. Almost immediately afterwards, however, its manner became markedly feverish. Having bitten his lordship in the thumb and sung part of a sea-chanty, it fell to the bottom of the cage and remained there for a considerable period of time with its legs in the air, unable to move. I merely mention this, sir, in order to——"

I put my finger on the flaw. I had spotted it all along.

"But Gussie isn't a parrot."

"No, sir, but——"

"It is high time, in my opinion, that this question of what young Gussie really is was threshed out and cleared up. He seems to think he is a male newt, and you now appear to suggest that he is a parrot. The truth of the matter being that he is just a plain, ordinary poop and needs a snootful as badly as ever man did. So no more discussion, Jeeves. My mind is made up. There is only one way of handling this difficult case, and that is the way I have outlined."

"Very good, sir."

"Right ho, Jeeves. So much for that, then. Now here's something else: You noticed that I said I was going to put this project through tomorrow, and no doubt you wondered why I said tomorrow. Why did I, Jeeves?"

"Because you feel that if it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well it were done quickly, sir?"

"Partly, Jeeves, but not altogether. My chief reason for fixing the date as specified is that tomorrow, though you have doubtless forgotten, is the day of the distribution of prizes at Market Snodsbury Grammar School, at which, as you know, Gussie is to be the male star and master of the revels. So you see we shall, by lacing that juice, not only embolden him to propose to Miss Bassett, but also put him so into shape that he will hold that Market Snodsbury audience spellbound."

"In fact, you will be killing two birds with one stone, sir."

"Exactly. A very neat way of putting it. And now here is a minor point. On second thoughts, I think the best plan will be for you, not me, to lace the juice."

"Sir?"

"Jeeves!"

"I beg your pardon, sir."

"And I'll tell you why that will be the best plan. Because you are in a position to obtain ready access to the stuff. It is served to Gussie daily, I have noticed, in an individual jug. This jug will presumably be lying about the kitchen or somewhere before lunch tomorrow. It will be the simplest of tasks for you to slip a few fingers of gin in it."

"No doubt, sir, but——"

"Don't say 'but,' Jeeves."

"I fear, sir——"

"'I fear, sir' is just as bad."

"What I am endeavouring to say, sir, is that I am sorry, but I am afraid I must enter an unequivocal *nolle prosequi*."

"Do what?"

"The expression is a legal one, sir, signifying the resolve not to proceed with a matter. In other words, eager though I am to carry out your instructions, sir, as a general rule, on this occasion I must respectfully decline to co-operate."

"You won't do it, you mean?"

"Precisely, sir."

I was stunned. I began to understand how a general must feel when he has ordered a regiment to charge and has been told that it isn't in the mood.

"Jeeves," I said, "I had not expected this of you."

"No, sir?"

"No, indeed. Naturally, I realize that lacing Gussie's orange juice is not one of those regular duties for which you receive the monthly stipend, and if you care to stand on the strict letter of the contract, I suppose there is nothing to be done about it. But you will permit me to observe that this is scarcely the feudal spirit."

"I am sorry, sir."

"It is quite all right, Jeeves, quite all right. I am not angry, only a little hurt."



"Very good, sir."

"Right ho, Jeeves."

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