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Where Bliss Overplayed

I'd just got home the other afternoon, out at Rockhurst on the Sound, and had only finished greetin' Sadie on the front steps, when around the corner of the house rolls a coffee colored gent, all got up in white ducks with an open front blouse and wearin' a cap that says "Tootsie" on the front of it. Also he's carryin' a market basket.

"Hello!" says I. "Who's landin' marines now?"

"Why, that must be Bliss's steward," says Sadie. "He's here with his new yacht, you know."

"Blissy with a yacht!" says I. "Then Auntie must have loosened."

"For good," says she. "Didn't I tell you? It happened out in California two months ago, and the estate was settled last week. Bliss is on his first cruise."

"Gee! He ain't losin' any time, is he?" says I.

"Well, it was expected, you know," says Sadie, "and he's been waitin' long enough, goodness knows!"

"There was no denyin' that part of the proposition, for ever since I've known anything about him, waitin' for a telegram has been Bliss's steady occupation. But maybe you've noticed how healthy these rich aunts can be sometimes."

I must say for Bliss, though, that he stood the strain well. He managed to worry along on the two hundred a month she doled out to him, kept up his club dues, stood off his tailor noble, and accepted all the week-end parties that came his way. Course, everyone knew he was to be handed a big bundle sooner or later; so he was treated just like he belonged.

Not only that, but they let him ring in his particular chum, J. Cushing Talte, who makes his entrance into the smart push about as well indorsed as the kid who slides in with the team carryin' the bat bag, or leadin' the most mascot. I forgot what was the whole of the pet name they has for Mr. Talte, something like Fidus Achates; but most everyone shortens it to Fido, which describes him a heap better.

I never got his pedigree exact, either, but I always understood he was a third cousin to some one who really counted, and that his excuse for dodgin' actual work was the fact that he holds out of these club jobs connected with the runnin' of some estate.

Anyway, him and Bliss made a great pair, and folks seemed to find their brother act useful as well as amusing, especially at house parties, where faithful bridge players and good dancin' men were apt to be scarce.

Besides that, they was more or less ornamental, specially this Bliss gent. He's a big, well padded party, with a chest on him like a circus strong man, and if he hadn't been some forty pounds overweight he might have posed as a Venus Apollonarian. All but his face I don't know what was wrong with it, but it looked like it had been made of putty by an amateur who was in a hurry to finish his job. You know—one of these big, round, flabby faces that has about as much expression as the front elevation of a custard pie.

Add to that combination a mincey walk which made him act like he was doin' a continuous minuet, and a fine, ladylike voice, and maybe you can get some idea of Bliss's style. Playin' a pipe organ was his special stunt; but, as musical instruments like that ain't common in country houses, he don't often get a chance to perform.

As for Mr. Talte, he's as slim and dapper as Bliss is thick and lanky. He's one of these nervous, fussy little chaps, quick and keen about most things, and an all round sport. He can jump a long-legged hunter over five bars before luncheon, and spend the afternoon nursin' billiard balls gentle along the cushion. He plays a snappy game of tennis, and when it comes to doin' the contortion stunts on the ballroom floor, he's right there with the goods. On general form I should say he had Bliss outclassed at every point; but around in the bunch where they circulate he's only Fido, who's asked along just because he's one of a team.

"I expect he's aboard with Bliss," says I to Sadie.

"Oh, of course," says she. "And there are eight or ten others. They must be somewhat crowded, for the Tootsie isn't very big; but, you see, Bliss made up his party before he chartered his yacht. They're going to cruise up as far as Newport."

"Sounds swell, don't it?" says I. "But why are they layin' up here?"

"Well, it seems Bliss wants to give a little moonlight dinner party on the deck for some of our crowd. The Purdy-Pellis and Pickney are invited, and, as he usin' our waterfront for a landin' place, of course we're on the list too. He's planned to pull it off the next night; but as there was some hitch about gettin' 'em all together, and as it's convenient bein' anchored near so many friends, he puts it off until Thursday."

"That's how it happens we see so much of this cruisin' party and gets revelations concernin' this affair of Mrs. Trickle De Graw. And, say, wherever you find a frisky young widow along, nine chances out of ten there's bound to be something worth reportin'."

Sadie, she cops out the situation durin' the first evenin' the Tootsie was at anchor off our back yard, while we was bein' shown over the boat. "Ah, ha!" she whispers to me, passin' me the nudge at the same time, and pointin' to the trio that drifts along together. It's Bliss on one side, Fido on the other, and Mrs. DeGraw in the middle. "That looks like a match."

"Gwan!" says I. "Do you think she could separate them two old bachelors permanent? And if she could, which do you think she'd pick?"

"Not bein' any expert along that line and hearin' how everyone else had framed it up the same way, I lets her get away with it without any debate. And it ain't long before the signs bein' given developin' accordin' to them specifications."

She's rather a cute, bunched little party, Trickle is, one of the "coolin' gals" kind that's always ready to do something or other; and the first thing we know she's dug up this four-year-old yarn about how Bliss rescued Fido from bein' crisped up that time the Agawasset Comedy Club burned.

Seems she's been pumpin' the pair for the story of their past lives, and this musty old stunt had come out. As a matter of fact, nobody had ever thrown much of a fit over it at the time, seein' as how it was partly by accident Bliss had discovered Fido

smoozin' away in his room, while the roof over him was ablaze. Bliss, to state it bald, had rushed up after his suitcase, but he stops long enough to yank J. Cushing off the mattress, and when he finds Fido has breathed in too much smoke to navigate alone he lugs him down. Mrs. DeGraw, though, gets a lot more out of it than that.

"Why, do you know," says she, "I never heard of anything so perfectly splendid! Just think! Mr. Bliss dashin' up into that burning building, fightin' his way through smoke and flame, and savin' Mr. Talte's life single handed! Wasn't that truly heroic, though?"

"Aw—er—I see," Mrs. DeGraw stammers Bliss, turnin' pink and gettin' embarrassed.

"But you did it you know you did!" insists the widow. "Didn't he, Mr. Talte?"

"Certainly he did," says Fido, "and I have never forgotten it. I shouldn't be here now I suppose, if he hadn't."

That was J. Cushing's line—for the first three or four times. He answers right up, prompt and hearty. Also Bliss tries at first to deny bein' any hero. But the widow don't let it go at that. No her! Every new arrival had to hear the tale, and when she'd run out of specifics she'd turn to Bliss and rema:

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know. And now really, McCabe, doesn't it strike you that Bliss is overacting this hero part?"

"Oh, I don't know," says I. "Well, I do," says he, "and I wish he would let up!"

"But the ladies seem to like hearin' it still," says I. "Specially Mrs. DeGraw."

"What!" says he, quick and anxious. "Oh, you don't understand. She—she's different."

And, say, I may be a little slow at such things; but now and then I can sit up and take notice without anythin' to use a hatpin on me. And I've tumbled to the fact that it's when he begins to discover how Mrs. DeGraw differs from other women that the symptoms get serious.

Course, Talte don't have much show, for on board his own yacht it's natural that Bliss should be the big noise; but now and then, if you was watchin' Bliss right up over the side and fops him down on the deck. Then, while Talte was paddlin' over to the steps, he proceeds to go through the life saving maneuver with Bliss rollin' his legs and pumpin' his arms up and down, with him groanin' away and beggin' 'em to let him alone.

Nobody was payin' much attention to Fido as he climbed aboard, until all of a sudden out from the bunch of women jumps Mrs. Trickle DeGraw, lettin' out gasps and gurgles as she goes, and makin' straight for J. Cushing. She's costumed in a black lace and gait evenin' dress which is some thing of a stunner, and Talte is more or less limp and soggy in his dripping yachtin' clothes; but that never stops her for a second.

"Oh, you brave, noble man!" says she, givin' him the high tackle and pattin' him in the middle of the back. "It was fine, splendid, heroic!"

"Eh? What's that?" says Bliss, recognizin' a familiar word, and shakin' in off the first aid helpers as he rolls over and sits up. That brings him facin' the tableau just forward of the companionway, where the widow and friend Talte is just breakin' away from their second clinch.

"Oh, fudge!" says Mr. Bliss. "Was it you who did that Cushty? Thanks, awfully. And I say, old chap, now we're outta, aren't we?"

"I hope so," says Talte.

And all leaky as they was they stood up there and shook hands on it, and waited while the steward cut the wire on three more bottles and filled up everybody's glass.

Say, Sadie, says I next day as we were down on the shore wavin' goodbye to the Tootsie, "did you notice who it was holdin' the widow's hand?"

From where I stood it looked liked faithful Fido was in on the gentle clasp.

"Pooh!" says Sadie. "I suspected it would be he, all along."

Gaynor's Daughter and Wife Pedestrians



MISS RUTH GAYNOR AND HER MOTHER, MRS. W. M. GAYNOR.

Mayor Gaynor of New York is an enthusiastic believer in walking as the best exercise. His wife and daughter share his views upon that subject, and are often to be seen trampin' through the parks. Miss Gaynor usually wears one of the latest of wide hats while out of doors. She thinks that the broad-brimmed hat is a sure preventative of freckles and tan, and besides it gives the prominence in the public eye which probably is due a mayor's daughter.

"Now you tell them, Bates, just how you saved your fur."

For awhile he needn'te urgin'; but after the first few words it seemed to come easier. Yee, Bliss wasn't exactly used to havin' the center of the stage; but understood it's a thing you can broke into easy, they say the h grows on you, too.

Anyway, it did on say. First thing he knew he waser in the talk around and ringin' the yarn all on his own hook. He seal expert at it, too; and when four or so would pass without him of his rescue act, you'd see a shiftn' around kind of uneasy, then pretty soon he'd get his c

"Speaking of sleepin' in," he'd begin, "just think how thoroughly asleep my friend Talte have been that night up at the agent."

Then Mrs. DeGraw would chime in with some question, and a minute more Bliss would be in some new details, while the other folks gathered around and mused things like, "Only fancy—in all smoke!" or, "How you could ever it, and with your suitcase in hand too?"

Well, you know how women like to over a story kind of thing. They don't seem to mind many repeats they get. As he, I can stand for as many as encores, and then I want a new—unless, of course, it's a good one tellin' myself.

So, whenever I'd see that the rescue recitation was to be sprung, I'd kind of drift towards the side lines. About that time I makes my back away, sees that I've got company. May be could guess who. Yes, it's faithful Fido.

What's the matter, T. says I, noddin' back toward them where Bliss is just pushin' the lime light once more. Ain't you on this scene?"

"Eh?" says he. "Begin?"

"Missin' something, you?" says I. "If I ain't read the indications wrong, your fat friend is about gettin' to the part where he drapes your unconscious form in a shouder and staggers through smoke and flames, amid thunderous applause of the spec' populace."