

INDISCRETIONS
OF ARCHIE

P. G. WOODHOUSE



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It wasn't Archie's fault really. It's true he went to America and fell in love with Lucille, the daughter of a millionaire hotel proprietor, and if he did marry her—well, what else was there to do?

From his point of view, the whole thing was a thoroughly good egg; but Mr. Brewster, his father-in-law, thought differently. Archie had neither money nor occupation, which was distasteful in the eyes of the industrious Mr. Brewster; but the real bar was the fact that he had once adversely criticised one of his hotels.

Archie does his best to heal the breach; but, being something of an ass, genus priceless, he finds it almost beyond his powers to placate "the man-eating fish" whom Providence has given him as a father-in-law.

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BY

P. G. WODEHOUSE

AUTHOR OF "THE LITTLE WARRIOR," "A
DAMSEL IN DISTRESS," "UNEASY
MONEY," ETC.



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DEDICATION
TO
B. W. KING-HALL

My dear Buddy,—

We have been friends for eighteen years. A considerable proportion of my books were written under your hospitable roof. And yet I have never dedicated one to you. What will be the verdict of Posterity on this? The fact is, I have become rather superstitious about dedications. No sooner do you label a book with the legend—

TO
MY BEST FRIEND
X

than X cuts you in Piccadilly, or you bring a lawsuit against him. There is a fatality about it. However, I can't imagine anyone quarrelling with you, and I am getting more attractive all the time, so let's take a chance.

Yours ever,

P. G. WODEHOUSE.

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CHAPTER I

DISTRESSING SCENE IN A HOTEL

I SAY, laddie!" said Archie.

"Sir?" replied the desk-clerk alertly. All the employes of the Hotel Cosmopolis were alert. It was one of the things on which Mr. Daniel Brewster, the proprietor, insisted. And as he was always wandering about the lobby of the hotel keeping a personal eye on affairs, it was never safe to relax.

"I want to see the manager."

"Is there anything I could do, sir?"

Archie looked at him doubtfully.

"Well, as a matter of fact, my dear old desk-clerk," he said, "I want to kick up a fearful row, and it hardly seems fair to lug you into it. Why you, I mean to say? The blighter whose head I want on a charger is the bally manager."

At this point a massive, grey-haired man, who had been standing close by, gazing on the lobby with an air of restrained severity, as if daring it to start anything, joined in the conversation.

"I am the manager," he said.

His eye was cold and hostile. Others, it seemed to say, might like Archie Moffam, but not he. Daniel Brewster was bristling for combat. What he had overheard had shocked him to the core of his being. The Hotel Cosmopolis was his own private, personal property, and the thing dearest to him in the world, after his daughter Lucille. He prided himself on the fact that his hotel was not like other New York hotels, which were run by impersonal companies and shareholders and boards of directors, and consequently lacked the paternal touch which made the Cosmopolis what it was. At other hotels things went wrong, and clients complained. At the Cosmopolis things never went wrong, because he was on the spot to see that they didn't, and as a result clients never complained. Yet here was this long, thin, string-bean of an Englishman actually registering annoyance and dissatisfaction before his very eyes.

"What is your complaint?" he enquired frigidly.

Archie attached himself to the top button of Mr. Brewster's coat, and was immediately dislodged by an irritable jerk of the other's substantial body.

"Listen, old thing! I came over to this country to nose about in search of a job, because there doesn't seem what you might call a general demand for my services in England. Directly I was demobbed, the family started talking about the Land of Opportunity and shot me on to a liner. The idea was that I might get hold of something in America——"

He got hold of Mr. Brewster's coat-button, and was again shaken off.

"Between ourselves, I've never done anything much

in England, and I fancy the family were getting a bit fed. At any rate, they sent me over here——”

Mr. Brewster disentangled himself for the third time.

“I would prefer to postpone the story of your life,” he said coldly, “and be informed what is your specific complaint against the Hotel Cosmopolis.”

“Of course, yes. The jolly old hotel. I’m coming to that. Well, it was like this. A chappie on the boat told me that this was the best place to stop at in New York——”

“He was quite right,” said Mr. Brewster.

“Was he, by Jove! Well, all I can say, then, is that the other New York hotels must be pretty mouldy, if this is the best of the lot! I took a room here last night,” said Archie, quivering with self-pity, “and there was a beastly tap outside somewhere which went drip-drip-drip all night and kept me awake.”

Mr. Brewster’s annoyance deepened. He felt that a chink had been found in his armour. Not even the most paternal hotel-proprietor can keep an eye on every tap in his establishment.

“Drip-drip-drip!” repeated Archie firmly. “And I put my boots outside the door when I went to bed, and this morning they hadn’t been touched. I give you my solemn word! Not touched.”

“Naturally,” said Mr. Brewster. “My employés are honest.”

“But I wanted them cleaned, dash it!”

“There is a shoe-shining parlour in the basement. At the Cosmopolis shoes left outside bedroom doors are not cleaned.”

“Then I think the Cosmopolis is a bally rotten hotel!”

Mr. Brewster’s compact frame quivered. The unfor-

givable insult had been offered. Question the legitimacy of Mr. Brewster's parentage, knock Mr. Brewster down and walk on his face with spiked shoes, and you did not irremediably close all avenues to a peaceful settlement. But make a remark like that about his hotel, and war was definitely declared.

"In that case," he said, stiffening, "I must ask you to give up your room."

"I'm going to give it up! I wouldn't stay in the bally place another minute."

Mr. Brewster walked away, and Archie charged round to the cashier's desk to get his bill. It had been his intention in any case, though for dramatic purposes he concealed it from his adversary, to leave the hotel that morning. One of the letters of introduction which he had brought over from England had resulted in an invitation from a Mrs. van Tuyl to her house-party at Miami, and he had decided to go there at once.

"Well," mused Archie, on his way to the station, "one thing's certain. I'll never set foot in *that* bally place again!"

But nothing in this world is certain.

CHAPTER II

A SHOCK FOR MR. BREWSTER

MR. DANIEL BREWSTER sat in his luxurious suite at the Cosmopolis, smoking one of his admirable cigars and chatting with his old friend, Professor Binstead. A stranger who had only encountered Mr. Brewster in the lobby of the hotel would have been surprised at the appearance of his sitting-room, for it had none of the rugged simplicity which was the keynote of its owner's personal appearance. Daniel Brewster was a man with a hobby. He was what Parker, his valet, termed a connoozer. His educated taste in Art was one of the things which went to make the Cosmopolis different from and superior to other New York hotels. He had personally selected the tapestries in the dining-room and the various paintings throughout the building. And in his private capacity he was an enthusiastic collector of things which Professor Binstead, whose tastes lay in the same direction, would have stolen without a twinge of conscience if he could have got the chance.

The professor, a small man of middle age who wore tortoiseshell-rimmed spectacles, flitted covetously about the room, inspecting its treasures with a glistening eye. In a corner, Parker, a grave, lean individual, bent over the chafing-dish, in which he was preparing for his employer and his guest their simple lunch.

"Brewster," said Professor Binstead, pausing at the mantelpiece.

Mr. Brewster looked up amiably. He was in placid mood to-day. Two weeks and more had passed since the meeting with Archie recorded in the previous chapter, and he had been able to dismiss that disturbing affair from his mind. Since then, everything had gone splendidly with Daniel Brewster, for he had just accomplished his ambition of the moment by completing the negotiations for the purchase of a site further down-town, on which he proposed to erect a new hotel. He liked building hotels. He had the Cosmopolis, his first-born, a summer hotel in the mountains, purchased in the previous year, and he was toying with the idea of running over to England and putting up another in London. That, however, would have to wait. Meanwhile, he would concentrate on this new one down-town. It had kept him busy and worried, arranging for securing the site; but his troubles were over now.

"Yes?" he said.

Professor Binstead had picked up a small china figure of delicate workmanship. It represented a warrior of pre-khaki days advancing with a spear upon some adversary who, judging from the contented expression on the warrior's face, was smaller than himself.

"Where did you get this?"

"That? Mawson, my agent, found it in a little shop on the east side."

"Where's the other? There ought to be another. These things go in pairs. They're valueless alone."

Mr. Brewster's brow clouded.

"I know that," he said shortly. "Mawson's looking