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THINKS BOWSER CRAZY

Mother-in-law Drops In on Him and Is Given a Welcome.

IT MADE HER SUSPICIOUS.

Fearing He Was Planning Attempt to Poison Her, She Went to a Hotel to Sleep, as She Did Not Want to Die Just Yet.

[Copyright, 1907, by Homer Sprague.] Mrs. Bowser had received a letter from her mother stating that she would arrive on a certain date and by a certain train for a brief visit—just long enough to straighten Mr. Bowser out and make him understand who was boss of the roost.



"WELL, MOTHER, I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU." tense surprise he arrived in a carriage, and the mother was with him. He had been at the depot on her arrival to meet her.

"Well, mother, I'm glad to see you," was the salutation that greeted her astonished ears, and she had turned pale and almost whispered the words:

"Is—is Sarah dead?" "Why, of course not," he laughed. "Then what are you here for?" "To meet you, of course. I have a carriage here at the door for us. Got the check for your trunk, or didn't you bring anything but your satchel? Glad to see you looking so well. Come right along."

It Was Her Son-in-law.

The mother-in-law looked again and again to see if she was mistaken in the man. He was a short man. He was a fat man. He was a baldheaded man. Yes, it was Mr. Bowser, but what sort of a game was he playing? After she had been riding five minutes a sudden suspicion came to her, and she wheeled on him and said:

"Samuel Bowser, don't think you can drive me off to some lonely spot and have me murdered! I'll fight for my life to the last gasp!"

Mr. Bowser roared with laughter, and then taking her hand he replied:

"Why, mother, what put such an idea into your head? Instead of wanting to murder you I want to give you the best visit you ever had at my house. You will find chicken potpie and all your favorite dishes for dinner."

"But you call me mother."

"And why shouldn't I?"

She didn't know. She knew that he had called her "old bulldozer," "that old woman," "that she wolf," and other things in the past, and that of a sudden an awful change must have come over him. It was he, but she couldn't believe it was him. Her relief was great when the carriage stopped at last in front of the house. To the very last minute she had expected to be abducted or blown up. Her very first words to Mrs. Bowser were:

"Sarah, has Samuel gone crazy or anything?"

"Why, no, mother. What makes you think such a thing?"

Met Her at the Depot.

"He—he met me at the depot."

"I didn't know that he was going to, but I am very glad of it."

"He—he called me mother."

"Yes."

"And he—he had a carriage."

"Just as it should be."

"But it isn't like him, Sarah—it isn't a bit like him. Think how many times he has let me come alone on a street car. Think how many times he has welcomed me here with only a sneer and a grunt. It was only the last time I was here that he called me a dodo. I tell you, Sarah, that there is something wrong with the man. He has either gone crazy or is planning to put me out of the way."

During the dinner Mr. Bowser was solicitous. He was also full of good cheer and lively conversation. Even Mrs. Bowser, who knew his every eccentricity, was surprised. The mother-in-law drank her tea and wondered if it had been slyly poisoned. She ate of the potpie and wondered if she would be found dead in the morning. Mr. Bowser told jokes and made her laugh.

But she was on her guard just the same. When dinner was over he asked her if she wanted to go to the theater, and when she begged to be excused he went out and bought her a fine bouquet. She accepted it with fluttering heart, and when he meekly sat down to take the curtain lecture she was always sure to give him she found herself unable to begin it. It was a glad relief to her when he said he guessed he'd drop into the club for an hour or so. With the slightest encouragement on her part he would have kissed her au revoir as he went out. When he was clear of the house she returned to her daughter and demanded:

"Now, then, how long has this thing been going on?"

"Do you mean Mr. Bowser?"

Noticed a Change.

"Of course I mean Mr. Bowser. When did you first notice the change in him?"

"Mother, Mr. Bowser is all right. He's just the same as other husbands. He has his good spells and his bad ones. Sometimes if he finds a hairpin on the floor or a broken dish in the back yard he'll stand up and scold and jaw for half an hour and tell how we are going to the poorhouse. Again, I might break three or four windows and he'd have nothing to say. You have happened to hit him with one of his good spells on."

"It may be so; it may be so," muttered the mother as she shook her head in a doubtful way. "Does he keep an ax down cellar?"

"I believe there's an old ax down there."

"Then tell the cook to get it and hide it. She should also hide the butcher knife. Have you paris green or rat poison in the house?"

"Not a bit. You don't suppose—"

"Sarah, you listen to me. Samuel may have what you call one of his good streaks on, or he may be as crazy as a bedbug and dissembling for a certain object. That object is my death. I have made him sit up and take notice. I have made him sit down and shut up. I have bluffed him out of his boots. Don't you forget that he would like to get even with me. Suppose he brings home poison with him? Suppose he sets the house afire tonight and rescues you and leaves me to perish in the flames?"

She Was Suspicious.

"Now, mother, you are talking as if you were crazy yourself," chided Mrs. Bowser. "No man is in love with his mother-in-law, but they generally respect them. You have given Mr. Bowser many a hard rub, but I am sure he bears no enmity."

The mother-in-law walked over to the telephone and called up the family doctor and asked:

"Doctor, what are the first symptoms of insanity in a man?"

"Just what do you mean?" was queried in reply.

"I am Mr. Bowser's mother-in-law."

"Yes, I have heard of you."

"I arrived here this evening."

"Yes."

"Mr. Bowser found out some way that I was coming, and he was at the depot with a carriage to meet me."

"You don't say! That's the first time I ever heard of such a thing in all my life."

"And wouldn't you consider it a sign of insanity on his part?"

"I should. The man must be as crazy as a loon. When you go to bed tonight double lock your door, pile all the furniture against it and sit up all night with a hatpin in your hand."

"That settles it," said the mother-in-law as she hung up the receiver. "Sarah, I'm going to a hotel to pass the night!"

"Why, mother!"

"No use to talk to me. I've felt that my life was in danger from the moment I saw Samuel at the depot, and now your own family doctor, who knows him from head to heel, has confirmed my worst suspicions. I have not come here to be murdered in my bed!"

Half an hour later Mr. Bowser came home. He asked for "mother," and Mrs. Bowser replied:

"She's gone to a hotel for fear of you."

"But what's the matter with me?"

"You are too good."

"Oh, —!" said Bowser as he sat down with a chug. M. QUAD.

In Old Kentucky.

"I hear Colonel Bourbon's left arm was cut off in the railway accident."

"Yes, sah; a most unfortunate occurrence, but fortunately his drinking arm was entirely uninjured."—New York Life.

In the Jungle.

Mrs. Python—I think Mrs. Cobra is very extravagant.

Mrs. Boa—in what way?

Mrs. Python—I see she has got her baby a new rattle.—Baltimore American.

Never-r-r-r!

Captain—Put on this lifebelt quick, madam; the vessel has struck.

Madam—What me put on an ugly old belt like that? Never!—Pele Mele.

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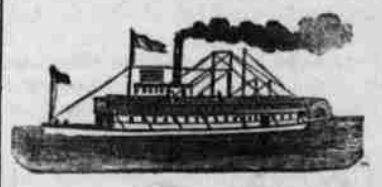
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