

Excerpt from P. G. Wodehouse's Indiscretions of Archie



At about the same moment that Professor Binstead was clicking his tongue in Mr. Brewster's sitting-room, Archie Moffam sat contemplating his bride in a drawing-room on the express from Miami. He was thinking that this was too good to be true. His brain had been in something of a whirl these last few days, but this was one thought that never failed to emerge clearly from the welter.

Mrs. Archie Moffam, nee Lucille Brewster, was small and slender. She had a little animated face, set in a cloud of dark hair. She was so altogether perfect that Archie had frequently found himself compelled to take the marriage-certificate out of his inside pocket and study it furtively, to make himself realise that this miracle of good fortune had actually happened to him.

"Honestly, old bean-I mean, dear old thing,--I mean, darling," said Archie, "I can't believe it!"

"What?"

"What I mean is, I can't understand why you should have married a blighter like me."

Lucille's eyes opened. She squeezed his hand.

"Why, you're the most wonderful thing in the world, precious!--Surely you know that?"

"Absolutely escaped my notice. Are you sure?"

"Of course I'm sure! You wonder-child! Nobody could see you without loving you!"

Archie heaved an ecstatic sigh. Then a thought crossed his mind. It was a thought which frequently came to mar his bliss.

"I say, I wonder if your father will think that!"

"Of course he will!"

"We rather sprung this, as it were, on the old lad," said Archie dubiously. "What sort of a man IS your father?"

"Father's a darling, too."

"Rummy thing he should own that hotel," said Archie. "I had a frightful row with a blighter of a manager there just before I left for Miami. Your father ought to sack that chap. He was a blot on the landscape!"

It had been settled by Lucille during the journey that Archie should be broken gently to his father-in-law. That is to say, instead of bounding blithely into Mr. Brewster's presence hand in hand, the happy pair should separate for half an hour or so, Archie hanging around in the offing while Lucille saw her father and told him the whole story, or those chapters of it which she had omitted from her letter for want of space. Then, having impressed Mr. Brewster sufficiently with his luck in having acquired Archie for a son-in-law, she would lead him to where his bit of good fortune awaited him.

The programme worked out admirably in its earlier stages. When the two emerged from Mr. Brewster's room to meet Archie, Mr. Brewster's general idea was that fortune had smiled upon him in an almost unbelievable fashion and had presented him with a son-in-law who combined in almost equal parts the more admirable characteristics of Apollo, Sir Galahad, and Marcus Aurelius. True, he had gathered in the course of the conversation that dear Archie had no occupation and no private means; but Mr. Brewster felt that a great-souled man like Archie didn't need them. You can't have everything, and Archie, according to Lucille's account, was practically a hundred per cent man in soul, looks, manners, amiability, and breeding. These are the things that count. Mr. Brewster proceeded to the lobby in a glow of optimism and geniality.

Consequently, when he perceived Archie, he got a bit of a shock.

"Hullo-ullo-ullo!" said Archie, advancing happily.

"Archie, darling, this is father," said Lucille.

"Good Lord!" said Archie.

There was one of those silences. Mr. Brewster looked at Archie. Archie gazed at Mr. Brewster. Lucille, perceiving without understanding why that the big introduction scene had stubbed its toe on some unlooked-for obstacle, waited anxiously for enlightenment. Meanwhile, Archie continued to inspect Mr. Brewster, and Mr. Brewster continued to drink in Archie.

After an awkward pause of about three and a quarter minutes, Mr. Brewster swallowed once or twice, and finally spoke.

"Lu!"

"Yes, father?"

"Is this true?"

Lucille's grey eyes clouded over with perplexity and apprehension.

"True?"

"Have you really inflicted this-THIS on me for a son-in-law?" Mr. Brewster swallowed a few more times, Archie the while watching with a frozen fascination the rapid shimmying of his new relative's Adam's-apple. "Go away! I want to have a few words alone with this--This-WASSYOURDAMNAME?" he demanded, in an overwrought manner, addressing Archie for the first time.

"I told you, father. It's Moom."

"Moom?"

"It's spelt M-o-f-f-a-m, but pronounced Moom."

"To rhyme," said Archie, helpfully, "with Bluffinghame."

"Lu," said Mr. Brewster, "run away! I want to speak to-to-to--"

"You called me THIS before," said Archie.

"You aren't angry, father, dear?" said Lucilla

"Oh no! Oh no! I'm tickled to death!"