She Was Traveling with Her Aunt

Evelyn Covault*
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By Evelyn Covault

"I'm SORRY. You dropped your glove," he said.

Beverly turned all colors of the rainbow; she knew she did. This was perfectly terrible. She would die rather than have any young man—yes, any young man—think that she was a pick-up! She was terribly confused, and the young man was smiling so amusedly!

"I—I. Why, thank you," she said with difficulty.

"You are entirely welcome," he said, still smiling. He had the situation in hand now.

Beverly took the glove. She elevated her little chin slightly, and then she smiled a little to herself because it was funny, and girls who travel with their aunts are more prone to laughter when away from them than girls who don't.

Finally she gurgled, "I can't help it what you think. I did not do that on purpose. I swear I didn't."

"Oh, that," said the young man pleasantly, "anyone could tell that. But you must admit that the situation is—well—at least ludicrous."

"Yes," agreed Beverly, "it is."

"Would there be any harm in my walking back to the hotel with you?" he asked courteously. "May I—?"

"Oh, it's quite all right," said Beverly very formally, "since we are both strangers. But did you see me at the hotel?"

"Oh, yes," he answered briefly.

They walked along in silence, Beverly feeling pleased and cheap by turns. A pick-up! Oh, no. Just walking to the hotel. What harm could there be in that?

"You mind if I smoke?" he asked in a moment.

He reached into his coat pocket for the package of cigarettes and then began fumbling in his inside pockets for a match. Beverly watched him uninterestedly and then caught her breath.
“Oh, are you a Beta Pi?”
He glanced down at his vest.
“Why, yes. You know the pin?”
“Know it!” She laughed, feeling suddenly less a stranger.
“I have two brothers who are Beta Pi’s and an uncle and a father.”
“No?” he exclaimed. “No kidding?”
“Really! Isn’t this fun?”
“Where from? I mean, what chapter?”
“Well, Dad and my brothers went to Ohio State, but my uncle was an Illinois man.”
“You don’t say so! I graduated from Michigan myself, but meeting someone so mixed up with Beta Pi’s is almost like meeting someone from home.”
“Isn’t it a coincidence?” She no longer felt like a pick-up.
“Dad and the boys will be so excited when I tell them.”

“WHEN DID your brothers graduate?”
“Let’s see. Dick graduated in ’27 and Charlie in ’30, I think. Yes, that’s right. Did you ever meet a Richard Dean or a Charles Dean?”
“Charlie Dean. Charlie Dean. Let me see. ’27 is a little before my time, but I graduated in ’31 myself. Charlie Dean? That name—listen, is he a tall, blond guy with very blue eyes and a scar on his chin?”
“Yes, yes, that’s Charlie!” she cried eagerly. “Did you know him?”
“I sure did. A bunch of boys from Ohio came up to a football game once between Michigan and Ohio and stayed at the house, and Charlie Dean and I had a game of handball together!”
Beverly just giggled with delight.
“This is too good for words!” the Beta Pi exclaimed exultingly. “The next time you see your brother ask him if he remembers Phil Cumberland. He ought to. Lord! What he didn’t do to me at handball!”
“Phil Cumberland? I certainly will.”
“And you are Miss Dean?”
“Yes, Beverly Dean.”
“A nice name,” he told her and smiled charmingly.
“Why, here’s the hotel,” she cried. “I didn’t dream—.”
He seemed disappointed. "Say, listen," he ventured as they entered the lobby. "Couldn't you—wouldn't it be perfectly proper for you to have dinner with me here this evening? I understand that Benny Bickel is playing, and he's good. Don't you think—that is to say—would you like to?"

Beverly realized only too well how much she would like to, for the young man had such a nice walk and such a lovely smile, and he wore his clothes so well, but—

"I really would love it," she told him soberly, "but you see, I'm with my aunt, and—"

"Oh," he looked crestfallen. An aunt, of all people. Beverly had been going to add something, but she didn't. Instead she smiled to herself at his distress.

"You couldn't get away, I mean?"

"Oh, no," she said. "Really I couldn't."

"But perhaps, if you explained—I mean, you said you had an uncle who was a Beta Pi; maybe he's her husband, and she would—"

BEVERLY had to laugh in spite of herself. "No, my aunt has no husband. She's—"

He groaned. "A maiden aunt. The very worst."

"Quite the worst sort of an aunt, I assure you."

"You have to mind your P's and Q's especially?"

"Oh, very especially."

"Listen," said Phil Cumberland, "I want to dine and dance with you in the very worst way this evening—that is, of course, if you want to dine and dance with me—."

"Oh, I do," she cried involuntarily.

"Then bring your aunt along," he said recklessly. "I'll dance with her too."

"Oh, my aunt doesn't dance," Beverly explained, a provocative dimple appearing at the corner of her mouth at the thought of such a thing, "but I don't think she would mind watching us at dinner, if you are willing to have her and will be very nice to her."

"I'm willing, except—"

"Except?"

"I couldn't see you alone at all," he said with disarming frankness.

Beverly considered. "Well," she said slowly, "my aunt goes
to bed very early. At about eight-thirty in fact. When we go to shows in the evening, we always must go to the first showing, and we can never stay for the comedy or the newsreel. We might go somewhere at nine. But—but I don’t know what she’ll say to my picking you up this way.”

“I’m a fraternity brother of your father and uncle and brothers.”

“She might never realize—.”

“Now say you’ll meet me in the dining room at six-thirty with your aunt. We’ll dine and dance, and she will altogether approve, and then at nine we’ll meet again and go to see ‘The Purple Cow’ or anything you say.”

“All right.”

“Marvelous!”

PHIL CUMBERLAND was singing while he shaved.

“Sa-awe-et Soooo, Ju-ust yoooo—”

And he was thinking, “What a girl! If it only weren’t for the aunt, but then, after nine—”

At precisely six-thirty he entered the dining room and glanced around. She was facing him across the room and smiled a welcome. He hurried to her, scarcely noticing a figure opposite her.

“Bev—Miss Dean,” he exclaimed. “How are you?”

She gave him her hand and greeted him gladly. Then he glanced toward her companion.

“Why, where—?” he queried involuntarily.

The companion sat perched in her chair with her brown bare legs dangling well above the floor in their pink ankle socks. Her pink hair ribbon bobbed perkily on her long yellow curls.

“Oh, I beg your pardon,” exclaimed Beverly, dimpling charmingly. “My aunt.”

Her Love

By Regina Kildee

She had
His pin. She knew
She ought to love him, though
She didn’t, quite. But how she loved
His pin!