"The Best Laid Plans - - - ”

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By Katherine Griffith

IT SEEMED THAT Mother "had gone and done it". The crumpled sheet of paper in Dottie's hand was a very cheery, homey letter from Mother. And in it Mother had innocently informed her that a Mr. Dick Alexander was coming to town and Dottie was to take care of him. Oh, she hadn't exactly put it that way, but that is what she had meant. Anyone could see that. She had said it sweetly:

"By the way, dear, the son of an old school friend of mine stopped to see me today. His name is Dick Alexander and he is a grad of State. He's going up for the big game this weekend, and I'm sure you'll enjoy seeing him. I told him you'd meet him at the train in the morning and kind of help show him around; he has big ideas for Saturday night, he says. Though he probably will find a great many changes in the campus since he was in school, I think you will have a lot in common."

So there it was. A whole day shot with some egg. And just when she was beginning to make headway with Jack. Mother didn't realize what she was asking! This old duck would turn out to be someone who had been graduated ten years ago and was getting bald and wore glasses!

And that wasn't the worst of it. If she didn't get this date with Jack, Hazel would. Heaven knows Hazel was working tooth and toenail to beat her time with Jack. Things were pretty much of a tossup now, but if Hazel got this advantage—!

"My pal!" Dottie scowled darkly. "Yeah, I know why she's always running around with me—afraid I'm going to meet Jack, that's all. Always being sweetie-pie to me and wanting to borrow my ear-rings and things. Just as if—Say! I'd like to——!" and the great idea was born.
Caroling blithely, Dottie stood under the shower five minutes later and planned her campaign. Only a half hour till her date with Jack and only a week till Dick King arrived—and so much to be done.

On the way back to her room Dottie stopped in Hazel's doorway.

"Hi ya, keed. Say, you can wear my green earrings tonight if you want to. They'd go keen with your dress."

"Thought you were going to wear them yourself?" Hazel demanded suspiciously.

"Nope. Guess I'll wear the gold ones. I have several sets I could wear."

The little thrust seemed to allay Hazel's distrust.

"Well—," she weakened, "if you don't mind—"

"It's okeydoke by me," said Dottie airily. "Drop around to my room when you're ready for them."

A LITTLE LATER, when Hazel stopped at Dottie's room, she found her applying lipstick in a preoccupied manner.

"Oh, hello, Hazel. Sit down somewhere and I'll get those doodads for you in just a jerk. Here, throw that stuff over on my desk—or sit on the bed if you want to."

She was silent a minute, surveyed her work, and then added a few more touches.

"You know," she moaned confidentially, "I do have the darnedest luck! Here I am all sewed with Jack for next Saturday, and I just got a letter from Mother that the smoothest man is coming and expects a date with me. I don't know what I can do—get him a date with someone else I guess."

She wrinkled her nose. "Hate to though. I'd like just plenty well to have a date with him myself. Oh well, can't have everything. And Jack said—Say!"

She whirled around to face Hazel as if struck with a sudden idea.

"Tell you what. You don't have a date for next Saturday, do you? I thought you wouldn't as long as I'm going with Jack— But here's the point. Maybe I can persuade Dick to take a date with you that night instead of me. I'll tell him that I couldn't help it, and I'll play you up big to him, see? Boy, oh boy, that's a relief to me—and I know it is to you, too."
It would be awful not to have a date on the biggest night of the year."

A few hours later Dottie said casually to Jack, "Well, I guess you’re out of luck for next week-end. I understand your friend Hazel’s got a heavy date from out of town for Saturday. Someone imported — college lads aren’t good enough for her."

Then Jack made the move she had counted on; he asked her for the date.

"Oh you’re just asking me because you know you can’t get her—. Honestly, did you intend to ask me anyhow? Well, in that case—"

DOTTIE was very happy that night. She cold-creamed her face vigorously, did her dozen bending exercises, and tumbled into bed prepared to sleep the sleep of the just. Everything had turned out as she had planned. She had a date with Jack; she had gotten rid of the obnoxious Dick Alexander; she had tricked her hearest enemy out of a date and got her stuck with a prune.

"All’s fair in love and war," she murmured sleepily.

When the next Saturday rolled around, Dottie went to meet the train with the feeling that the stage was set for the final act. After she had met Dick, she wouldn’t have to see him again. She’d sit in the student section at the game while his ticket would be in the guest section. And Hazel would have the date with him in the evening.

When the train pulled in, she scanned the alighting passengers. There were only a few; still she didn’t see anyone who could be Dick Alexander. A blond Viking detached himself from the little group and came toward her. His hair curled crisply, and his blue eyes crinkled at the corners as he smiled down at her from his towering six feet two.

"Are you Dottie Duncan?" he inquired pleasantly. Dottie nodded dumbly.

"I’m Dick Alexander. Very much in person and awfully glad to see you. You’re to be sure to wear your rubbers when it rains, use Vicks when you feel a cold coming on, and remember not to eat the wrong things after ten o’clock
at night. There! I've been rehearsing that all the way here. Didn't I do well to remember at least half the things I was to tell you?"

“Yes, but who—but how—I mean—” Dottie stumbled bewilderedly.

“Oh, you mean how did I know you? That's easy. I just picked out the cutest brunette at the station and there you were! I knew Dottie Duncan would be tiny and have black curls.”

Dottie gave up her fight for composure and allowed herself to be swept along.

“My car’s over here,” she put in feebly.

He tucked her hand under his arm companionably and they started off. When they reached the little sport roadster he voiced his admiration.

“Say! that’s neat,” he exclaimed. “Just plenty nice. Shall I drive?” And as he helped her in, he said, “Just the kind of a car that a little girl like you would have.”

DOTTIE was rapidly marshaling her thoughts. Good heavens, the man was perfect! She’d have to rally a line from somewhere. He’d think her an awfully dumb bunny if she sat there as mum as an oyster!

“I’m staying at the Beta Xi house,” he was saying. “Haven’t been back to the old homestead since I graduated three years ago. Wonder if any of the old grads are still around?”

In a daze, Dottie finally reached her own room, shut the door, and sank in a heap on the bed. Her mind whirled with the sudden change of events. Beta Xi—the best fraternity on the campus—tall and good-looking—a wonderful line—just the right touch of sophistication—oh, something had to be done! Any one but a green freshie like herself would have remembered Dick Alexander, the great football player. Beside him Jack was merely an insignificant, callow kid.

She stirred herself to action. Dick was to meet her after the game—she still had a few hours. First she went to Hazel’s room.

“Listen, Hazel, that blind date we cooked up for you simply won’t do. Sure he’s all right—but I mean he won’t take a
blind date with anyone but me. Says he came up here with that understanding and he won’t accept substitutes. So I guess I’ll have to take it. But look, I’ll fix it up with you and Jack. OK?”

Then she called Jack.

“Listen, Jack,” she wailed, “I broke my leg or something. What I mean is, I can’t keep our date this evening. I’m awfully sorry; I know it’s awfully late to let you know, but I just found out myself—I’ll explain later. But look, Jack—Hazel’s big date fell through and I happen to know she’s without one tonight. Why don’t you call her? Oh that will be fine for both of you. And you’re a dear for being so nice. Thanks just heaps. So long.”

With the stage again set for action Dottie met Dick after the game. It had been a grand game. They had won—gloriously. Everyone was shouting at his friends and laughing uproariously. Excitement was at fever pitch. Dottie, huddled against Dick’s shoulder in a booth at the favorite student haunt, had never been so thrilled in her life. This was more than existence—this was the way college should be!

“Dottie, your mother told you that I had big ideas and all—plans—for tonight, didn’t she?”

“Yes, Dick,” said Dottie softly. The big moment was at hand!

“I told her to tell you so you could go ahead with your plans; I didn’t want to butt in on you, you know.” He smiled. “I’m really getting excited about it. I’m going to the dance with a girl I used to go with when I was in school.”

Where Second Growth Is Old

Frances Flint Hamerstrom

I want to be once more where second growth is old,
   Where towering trees grow tall
Though man had cleared the woods.
I want to be once more on land that’s rich and old,
   Where man and all his goods
Have been, yet seem so small
—Rotting away in mould.