

"A voice in howdy-pal accents"

(continued from previous page)

"Let me look," urged Nancy, craning over. Then she giggled. "It's got a face like Mrs. Cauldron."

"I've never seen a more dissolute pink-elephant!" laughed Sid.

"And active!" declared grandfather proudly. "I had a job getting him to stand still so I could draw him!"

* * *

SO Sid was cheered and strengthened for the life that lay ahead. And life was becoming increasingly difficult. By various underhand devices, he managed to leave his pets behind, and get out now and then for a breath of fresh air. But he seldom returned without adding an animal or two to his collection.

The climax came one day when Sid's grandfather, scorning lighter brews, took to drinking french polish, and *materialised* his pink-elephant! He broke the news first to Nancy. Nancy looked at the beast doubtfully. Grandfather rubbed his hands with pride and pleasure. "There you are, Nancy! I've materialised him. All my own work!"

"Hooba-hooba-hooba!" commented the pink-elephant joyfully, joining in the general feeling of jubilation.

"See!" shouted grandfather. "It talks!"

"But he's over six feet high!" protested Nancy. "I thought from your painting that he was a little fellow. Aren't you afraid of him?"

"Me? I've known him since he was so high." Grandfather demonstrated with a finger poised half a foot above the sofa.

"Hooba-hooba-hooba," remarked the pink-elephant agreeably, wishing to put Nancy at her ease.

A paean of canine praise from outside the whare indicated that Sid was returning with his latest bag of converts. "Here comes Sid," remarked Nancy. "Has he seen it yet?"

"No, he hasn't. He'll be most surprised and pleased."

Surprised was the right word. Sid entered hurriedly, having adopted Mrs. Cauldron's technique of leaving the dogs behind him. The door slammed. "Just made it!" gasped Sid. Then he saw the pink-elephant. "Good Lord! What's that?"

Nancy suddenly awoke to a new danger. "Sid," she screamed. "Don't look it in the eye!"

She was too late. The pink-elephant had received the full impact of Sid's newly-acquired influence-over-animals. It swayed on its feet like a Sinatra'd bobby-soxer. "Hooba-hooba-hooba!" it murmured, faintly but adoringly.

"Oh heavens, Sid!" gasped Nancy. "He's yours for life!"

It will be understood why life was becoming increasingly difficult for Sid Chaffinch. But, being a man of iron determination, he set off next day for Miss Nine's home, accompanied by his retinue of dogs. Sid was hoping that the effect of the vitamin might be wearing off, and that Miss Kay Nine would be able to persuade her dogs to stop home. So he set off, and, of course, the pink-elephant went along too.

Kay met Sid at the gate. "Don't you dare come in! You dog-stealer!"

"I see you've got some new dogs," said Sid. "Could you take these off my hands as well?"

"You know perfectly well they won't stay with me. They just come home once a day to wolf a meal, and then go back to you. . . . Goodness gracious! What's that?"

"What?"

"That horrible-looking thing following you?"

"Hooba-hooba-hooba," said the pink-elephant, introducing itself.

"It's a pink-elephant," said Sid unhappily.

"Taken to drink now, have you?"

"Isn't it enough to make a man?" pleaded Sid. "But it's not actually mine. It's grandfather's."

"Then why does it follow you?"

"Just like your dogs."

"I believe you're telling me the truth," said Kay, after a pause.

"I am."

"But what an awful thing to have following you about. People will think you've got the D.T.'s."

Sid cleared his throat. "Kay, will you marry me?"

"Don't be silly, Sid. Marry a man with a pink-elephant tied to his apron-strings?"

"All right," said Sid, now desperate and ruthless. "I'm sorry to have to use force. See those new dogs of yours? I've been avoiding looking them in the eye. But if you don't say 'yes' this time, I'll put the influence on them."

"Sid! You wouldn't be so horrid!"

"Will you marry me?"

"No!"

"Right! I'm going to look at them!"

Kay, broken, sought concessions. "Promise me you'll stop drinking so much!" she shouted.

Sid shouted in return. "I don't drink so much."

"I mean, stop your grandfather!"

"What if I can't?"

"You've got to! It's a most horrible pink-elephant!"

"Hooba-hooba-hooba!" cried the pink-elephant, outraged.

"Love me, love my pink-elephant," Sid insisted.

"Hooba-hooba-hooba." The pink-elephant approved these sentiments.

"You're fond of animals, aren't you?" continued Sid at the top of his voice.

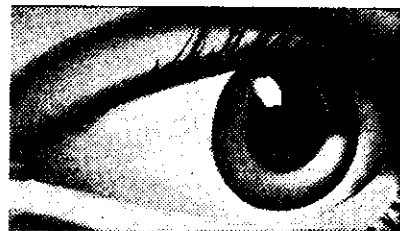
"What's wrong with a pink-elephant?"

"Hooba-hooba-hooba!" cried the pink-elephant, getting excited.

"Shut up, you! Don't interrupt!" screamed Kay.

(continued on next page)

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