

" My Favorite Animal "

by;

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Few people have heard of the animal I am about to describe . In fact , it is so rare that I dare say no more than three or four persons even know of its existence . To really explain the appearance and character of this animal ( I call it an animal because , although it has some features of a fish and a bird , it comes a trifle closer to being an animal ) , I shall have to go back a few years . .

At that time , I was engaged by the Peabody Institute of Unnatural Phenomena to explore the inner wilds of Lower Slobbovia , a place hitherto thought to exist only in the imagination of a radical cartoonist. ( Ah , if the public only knew the truth , there would be great danger of a complete upheaval of our social levels . ) The Institute had heard rumors of this strange land and had already sent two other expeditions , under the capable leadership of Dr. Phinias O'Hara and Dr. Jacob Sullbin , there. Curiously enough , nothing was ever heard from the members of these expeditions and it was supposed that the citizens of Lower Slobbovia had , in some way , detained them . .

The Institute wanted our expedition to be carried on with the utmost secrecy and , in order not to attract attention , we decided to pick up our main party at our first base . We left from an obscure east coast city called Boston and twenty days later found ourselves docking at Singabel . Only my trusted assistant , Thursday , had made the trip with me , but we had more than sufficient funds with which to organize a good sized expedition .

As we left the ship , the heat stuck us like an open blast furnace . No matter how much we loosened our fur coats , we were still bathed in perspiration . The minute we set foot on the dock , a native , clad only in a loin cloth and a red cap , came running up to us . It took some time for us to catch on to his strange dialect , but he finally made it clear that he wanted to carry our bags . As he wore a union button on his

right ear , we decided that perhaps it would be safe enough . We had departed rather hurriedly and so had not taken much luggage , but he seemed perfectly satisfied to carry our toothbrushes .

Pushing our way through the crowded dock , we attempted to reach a cab , or some such vehicle , to take us to a hotel . It was like trying to plunge through Nôtre Dame's line . Above the din of the crowd , the cries of the local venders reached our ears .

" Freshly dried heads ! Get your heads here . Blonde ! Brunette ! Red head ! We have them all ."

" Get your programs here , folks , you can't tell a Lower Slobbovian from an Upper Pancreasan without a program ."

That last one did it . Motioning to our bag carrier , I told him to get me a program . His face turned white , his union button quivered , and his bare toes curled up .

" Boss," he said , " it all won't do you all any good to get yourself one of dem all programs . If you all meet up with one all of them Lower Slobbovians all or with one all of dem all Upper Pancreasan all , you all will be a dead duck all ."

Naturally , after this speech , we were rather reluctant to proceed with our plans , but we were strengthened by our Institute motto - " chin up , carry on". After considerable arguing , we managed to get our red cap friend to aid us in organizing our expedition . He seemed to know a lot about Lower Slobbovia and , although at first he was reluctant , he soon threw himself into the business of organizing with complete abandon. Within a week , " All " , as we called him , had all the preparations completed . He cautioned us against letting any of the bearers know where we were bound . I agreed with him , as the prospect of scores of natives turning white with fear was more than I could stand .

A close friendship had sprung up between "All", Thursday, and me. The morning before our departure, "All" came in carrying a box. Setting it before me, he said:

"Bwana Flaharity, here all is a slight token all of my esteem for you all."

Naturally, I was bowled over by All's generosity and hastened to remove the cover from the box. The sight that greeted my eyes was almost unbelievable. A animal-like thing bounded out of the box and looked around, blinking its large brown eyes.

When it saw me, it started to wag the tuft of rooster-like feathers which took the place of a tail. At the end of the tuft was what appeared to be a five fingered hand. Its ears were long like a spaniel's. These contrasted strangely with its parrot-like beak. Most amazing of all was the fact that, although his body was shaped like a Daschund, it was supported by only one pair of legs. These legs were situated halfway along his body and, as he started to walk towards me, I saw his body swing back and forth, like the pendulum of a grandfather's clock. As I watched, he emitted a peculiar noise, halfway between a puppy bark and the noise made when a bottle of champagne is opened.

Leaning over to pat this cute little thing, I said to "All":

"What is this thing, or animal, or whatever you call it?"

"Why, Boss, This here all is what they all call a Bliffet all. What are you all going to call him all?"

"Well, "All", I haven't had much time to really think about what I should call him. He is such a cute little devil. Look at the way he rubs up against my leg and holds onto my hand with that tail hand of his. Wait a minute! I know what I shall call him. I have always had a desire to call a pet by this name and, as any fool can plainly see, this little thing is certainly a pet."

" Well, boss, what all is the name all ?"

" All, I shall call this homeless little Bliffet, ' My Favorite Animal. "

The friendship that soon developed between M.F.A., as I called him, and me was really amazing. We would walk down the street together with M.F.A. firmly clutching my hand with his; every now and then, he would emit his peculiar bark-pop.

Some other time, I shall tell you the horrible story of how, when we finally came in contact with the Lower Slobbovians, My Favorite Animal ' saved my life.

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