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he would have broken his neck on the bottom. As it was, he got a nasty jar, to judge from the frog-like expression on his romantic countenance, when he re-appeared with long tangles of weed adhering to his hair and person.

"Come along, dear!" he gasped, wading to the scarlet-clad maid on the bank and holding out his hand; catch hold and jump."

But Lenore drew back, and, shrinking from dredging operations of a personally conducted character, she decided in favour of the shallows lower down, where she rolled religiously about among the weedy pebbles till she was wet all over. The bath, in fact, was not an overwhelming success, but they really felt children of nature, as they ran back to the cottage through the hot sunlight, while the Sausage, relieved that their apparent attempts at suicide had failed, barked joyously at their heels. Another bath indoors was necessary, however, to cleanse the mud status from their persons, and it was two o'clock before they sat down to lunch, and never had they enjoyed kinned food so much.

"I don't think I shall write my maid poem at present," said Lancelot. "I think I shall make her a dryad instead—a woodland epic. We will go now into the woods and stay till nightfall."

"How lovely!" said Lenore. "I'll get my hat."

"Your what?" exclaimed the poet. "A hat?"

"Well, it looks inclined to rain, dear," said Lenore, "and the damp takes my fringe out of curl."

"Oh, fetch it by all means," he said coldly, "and bring a sun-lade, too."

Shamed by his scorn, Lenore brought neither, and the clouds, both celestial and domestic, soon passed, though a column of foul-smelling blue smoke appeared on the road before them when they started for their ramble, and round the corner they came in sight of a long line of vans of "Lamb's Travelling Circus," and saw that a closed van had come to grief and was being painfully extricated from the ditch by a puffing traction-engine. Disgusted at the foul fumes and language that was soiling the rural scene, the nature lovers scrambled up the bank, and plunged into the wood, and rambled blissfully until 4.30, when a dreadful craving for tea attacked them both so insistently that they retraced their steps in order to satisfy it.

"Of course, after a day or so," said Lancelot, "we shall get out of these town-bred habits, and go from breakfast at seven to dinner at three, and from then to a light repast after sundown, cheerfully and with comfort."

Lenore looked a little doubtful, and troubled, but did not contradict him.

"And we will sleep," he continued, with the rapt and dreamy expression she loved to see in his eyes—"we will sleep under the cedar tree in the garden, our

roof the dome of heaven, and our lamp the silver moon."

"You don't mean it!" ejaculated Lenore.

"Yes, I do," he replied; "and while I think of it, I'll go down and get those two camp bedsteads down and put them up under the tree. Shall we know Nature in her day-gown alone, and never see her in her dusky, star-spangled robe of night? As a matter of fact, I've got an idea for a lyric to that effect, and the words will come naturally to my brain when we are alone with the stars."

Lenore was not in sympathy with the idea. She said it was a pity to spoil the whole holiday by getting an influenza cold at the start, and well she knew that when a cold entered Lancelot's system, all the poetry went out of it. But his mind was made up, and so were the beds, and at 9.30 the nature lovers were in occupation of them, and lay silently gazing up at the "blue vault of heaven," though the "silver lamp" was not timed to appear for an hour or two. The Sausage lay on a small rug between them, and a very disgusted Sausage he was at the turn events had taken, though he preferred company in the open to loneliness under a strange roof.

All was still and sombre and mysterious.

"Are you asleep?" said Lenore. "Asleep? No," replied Lancelot. "I'm drunk with beauty."

"Oh," she said, "because I'm perfectly certain a large insect has just dropped on my bed from the tree. I wish you'd strike a match."

"Oh, it won't hurt you," said Lancelot. "It's only a wood-louse. They don't sting."

Lenore gave a little shuddering shriek, and the Sausage barked in sympathy.

"Oh, but I do loathe wood-lice," she whined.

"Oh, my dear girl," the poet ejaculated, "do control yourself, and try to get more in harmony with calm, brooding night. I don't believe you love nature at all."

"Oh, yes, I do," she cried eagerly; "but I hate insects, and I can't get in harmony with anything while they keep dropping on me."

"Well, they keep dropping on me, too," retorted Lancelot testily, "and I don't make such a fuss. It's sacrilege to break the stillness, not to mention my train of thought, with such puny complaints."

Lenore shut her eyes tight and snuggled down under her bedclothes, of which each had a plentiful supply, including a down counterpane.

Silence reigned for several minutes; then with a noisy flapping and melancholy hoot, a large white owl floated over their heads. Lenore moaned.

"Oh, Lancelot," she whispered, "I don't like it. It frightens me!"

"What frightens you?" said Lancelot, in a chilly, long-suffering voice.

"The dreadful weirdness of it all."

"Lenore," he said, sternly, "I'm surprised at you. You are no more in touch with Nature than the Sausage. You have been deceiving me."

"No, I haven't, dear," she replied, remorsefully. "I won't be so foolish. I won't disturb you again." But as she spoke a loud roar reverberated through the hush of the night, and, with an uncontrollable shriek, Lenore flew to her husband's side. "What is it? What is it?" she cried, clutching him.

"What's what?" he replied imperturbably.

"That dreadful roar!"

"I heard an old cow in the meadow, if that's what you mean."

"Oh, it didn't sound like a cow; it sounded just like feeding time at the Zoo. Lancelot, I believe it was a lion." Lancelot got up on his elbow, and disengaged himself from her clutch. "If you think it is a lion," he said roughly, "for heaven's sake go indoors and stop there. I must really beg you not to spoil my rest and enjoyment like this."

He had never spoken roughly to her before, and she rose with dignity. "I do not wish to spoil your enjoyment," she said, "and I will certainly go in."

She walked across the lawn with a haughty demeanour, for her heart was hot with anger—not so hot, however, but she sent back the Sausage, who followed her, to return to the cedar tree, to afford what protection he could to her cruel husband through the unknown dangers of the night. Then she went to bed in the blue bedroom, but before she cried herself to asleep, she consigned the two outsiders into the hands of Providence.

After communing with nature for about three-quarters of an hour, Lancelot also dropped off, and was awakened from his first sleep by the vague consciousness that there was something the matter with the Sausage. The moon was up and very bright, and over the rail at the foot of his bed he could see that the plump little pug was walking restlessly to and fro, sniffing the air in great agitation and trembling violently.

"Lie down, Sausage!" he exclaimed fiercely. "I wish to goodness you would go into the house, too, and confound you!"

over to look in the direction of the sound.

The swishing ceased, and the next moment a large animal leaped over the garden paling and stood on the grey, moonlit lawn. At first he thought it was a donkey with some curious growth on its head, but next moment, as it moved, its shape was silhouetted against the large circle of the rising moon, and he saw it was a lion.

"Thank heaven!" was his first mental ejaculation, and his gratitude was not prompted by the visit of the king of beasts, but because his wife was safe indoors. Then, without the slightest hesitation or even thought, he sprang from his bed, and though he had never done any tree-climbing even as a boy, he ran up that cedar tree like a monkey, and clung convulsively to the topmost branches, attired in a picturesque pair of pink-and-lavender-striped pyjamas.

"Thank heaven!" he said again, and this time it was because, after a rapid survey of his stock of natural history, he remembered that lions do not climb trees. The lion, in fact, seemed to take small interest in his proceedings, for it lurched off to the thick bushes near the gate and disappeared. Lancelot saw the bushes shake mysteriously, but heard no sound, but that was not surprising, for the thumping of his heart and the tumultuous drumming of his pulses deafened him. The branches of the cedar tree were hard and unsympathetic to his lightly-clad form, yet far from being cold, the perspiration poured off him, though cold shivers went up his backbone as the bushes parted, and, with a dignified and deliberate gait, the lion slouched across the moonlit lawn again and approached the beds. He sniffed curiously at Lancelot's hastily vacated couch, then, jumping upon it, began luxuriously treading up and down on the down counterpane with the kneading action of a cat on a cushion. Then, while Lancelot stared at him, with distended eyes and parted lips, through which the breath came sharp and short, the lion sank slowly down on the bed—dropped his great maned head between his huge paws, and went to sleep.

Meanwhile, snug and safe in the blue room, Lenore slumbered on, unconscious



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Before his appreciative eyes the country-side lay bathed in a silvery-grey haze of moonlight. He could see the dim outline of the opposite hill and the white streak of the high road winding up it, and he could distinctly hear the soft gurgle of the river over the ford at the bottom of the paddock. But another sound, that did not connect itself with the murmuring water, arrested his attention—a rhythmic "swish, swish," as if some large body was pushing its way through the cornfield.

"It's that wretched cow got in the corn," he said to himself, and turned

of the peril outside, though her dreams were decidedly troubled. She dreamt that she was bathing in a pie-dish on the lawn, and that Lancelot was calling her unutterable things because she would not duck her head right under. Then the pie-dish changed quite naturally to a swimming-bath, and Lancelot ordered her to dive in from the top board. Lenore had never dived before, but such was her husband's influence, even in dreams, that she obediently threw up her arms and sprang off, only to find when she was in mid-air that there was only half an inch of water in the bottom of the bath, and she was dashing head-