

## HE OVERDID IT

(from the story "The Rathskeller  
and the Rose"\* by *O. Henry*)

O. Henry, whose real name was William Sydney Porter, was an American short-story writer. His stories are still popular today. He was born in 1862 in a small provincial town. In his early years he tried many jobs, among which were several literary ones.

O. Henry's first story was published in 1899, when the writer was in prison on a false charge of stealing money from a bank. After he came out of prison, O. Henry became a professional writer.

O. Henry describes the life of the "little people": clerks, shop assistants and farm workers.. His stories are mainly humorous and amusing, with the traditional happy end. Through the gaiety and humour of his stories, however, the hard life of the poor can be seen.

O. Henry died in 1910.

Miss Posie Carrington had begun life in the small village of Cranberry Corners. Then her name had been Posie Boggs. At the age of eighteen she had left the place and become an actress at a small theatre in a large city, and here she took the name of Carrington. Now Miss Carrington was at the height of her fame, the critics praised her, and in the next season she was going to star in a new play about country life. Many young actors were eager to partner Miss Posie Carrington in the play, and among them was a clever young actor called Highsmith.

"My boy", said Mr Goldstein, the manager of the theatre, when the young man went to him for advice, "take the part

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\* В русском переводе «Погребок и роза».

if you can get it. The trouble is Miss Carrington won't listen to any of my suggestions. As a matter of fact she has turned down a lot of the best imitators of a country fellow already, and she says she won't set foot on the stage unless her partner is the best that can be found. She was brought up in a village, you know, she won't be deceived when a Broadway fellow goes on the stage with a straw in his hair and calls himself a village boy. So, young man, if you want to play the part, you'll hate to convince Miss Carrington. Would you like to try?" "I would with your permission," answered the young man. "But I would prefer to keep my plans secret for a while."

Next day Highsmith took the train for Cranberry Corners. He stayed three days in that small and distant village. Having found out all he could about the Boggs and their neighbours, Highsmith returned to the city...

Miss Posie Carrington used to spend her evenings at a small restaurant where actors gathered after performances.

One night when Miss Posie was enjoying a late supper in the company of her fellow-actors, a shy, awkward young man entered the restaurant. *It was clear that the lights and the people made him uncomfortable.* He upset one chair, sat in another one, and turned red at the approach of a waiter.

"You may fetch me a glass of beer", he said, in answer to the waiter's question. He looked around the place and then seeing Miss Carrington, rose and went to her table with a shining smile.

"How're you, Miss Posie?" he said. "Don't you remember me — Bill Summers — the Summerses that used to live next door to you? I've grown up since you left Cranberry Corners. They still remember you there. Eliza Perry told me to see you in the city while I was here. You know Eliza married Benny Stanfield, and she says —"

"I say", interrupted Miss Carrington brightly, "Eliza Perry married. She used to be so stout and plain." "Married in June," smiled the gossip. "Old Mrs Blithers sold her place to Captain Spooner; the youngest Waters girl ran away with a music teacher."

"Oh!" Miss Carrington cried out. "Why, you people, excuse me a while — this is an old friend of mine — Mr — what was it? Yes, Mr Summers — Mr Goldstein, Mr Ricketts. Now, Bill, come over here and tell me some more."

She took him to a vacant table in a corner.

"I don't seem to remember<sup>2</sup> any Bill Summers," she said thoughtfully, looking straight into the innocent blue eyes

of the young man. "But I know the Summerses all right, and your face seems familiar when I come to think of it. There aren't many changes in the old village, are there? Have you seen any of my people?"

And then Highsmith decided to show Miss Posie his abilities as a tragic actor.

"Miss Posie," said Bill Summers, "I was at your people's house just two or three days ago. No, there aren't many changes to speak of. And yet it doesn't look the same place that it used to be."

"How's Ma?" asked Miss Carrington.

"She was sitting by the front door when I saw her last," said Bill. "She's older than she was, Miss Posie. But everything in the house looked just the same. Your Ma asked me to sit down."

"William," said she. "Posie went away down that road and something tells me she'll come back that way again when she gets tired of the world and begins to think about her old mother. She's always been a sensible girl."

Miss Carrington looked uncomfortable.

"Well," she said, "I am really very glad to have seen you,<sup>3</sup> Bill. Come round and see me at the hotel before you leave the city."

After she had left, Highsmith, still in his make-up, went up to Goldstein.

"An excellent idea, wasn't it?" said the smiling actor. "The part is mine, don't you think? The little lady never once guessed."

"I didn't hear your conversation," said Goldstein, "but your make-up and acting were perfect. Here's to your success. You'd better visit Miss Carrington early tomorrow and see how she feels about you."

At 11.45 the next morning Highsmith, handsome and dressed in the latest fashion, sent up his card to Miss Carrington at her hotel.

He was shown up and received by the actress's French maid.

"I am sorry," said the maid, "but I am to say this to everybody. Miss Carrington has **cancelled all engagements** on the stage and has returned to live in that — what do you call that place? — Cranberry Corners!"

#### NOTES

1. Why, you people, excuse me a while. *Послушайте (друзья), я отойду на минутку.* Слово **people** употреблено

здесь как фамильярное обращение к своим товарищам. Это слово употребляется также (в основном в разговорной речи) в значении *родители* или *сослуживцы*.

**My people are moving to town on Sunday.** В воскресенье моя семья переезжает в город.

**I shall let my people know your prices.** Я сообщу своей фирме (другим работникам фирмы) о ваших ценах.

**2. I don't seem to remember any Bill Summers.** Я что-то не припомню никакого Билла Саммерса. Глагол *to seem* в составе сказуемого *don't seem to remember* показывает, что говорящий выражает неуверенность, сомнение. Обратите внимание на способы перевода такого сказуемого на русский язык.

**She didn't seem to be listening to him.** Казалось, она не слушала его.

**The child seems to be asleep.** Ребенок, кажется, спит.

**3. I'm really very glad to have seen you.** Я так рада, что встретила с вами. **To have seen** — перфектный инфинитив — употребляется для выражения действия, предшествующего сказуемому предложению.

#### PROPER NAMES

**O. Henry** ['ou 'henri] О. Генри  
**William Sydney Porter** ['wiljəm 'sidni 'pɔ:tə] Уильям Сидней Портер  
**Posie Carrington (Boggs)** ['pəʊsi 'kærɪŋtən] Поузи Каррингтон (Борз)  
**Cranberry Corners** ['krænbəri 'kɔ:nəz] Крэнберри Корнерз (название деревни)  
**Highsmith** ['haɪsmɪθ] Хайсмит  
**Mr Coldstein** ['mɪstə 'ɡouldstəɪn] мистер Голдстейн  
**Broadway** ['brɔ:dweɪ] Бродвей  
**Summers** ['sʌməz] Саммерс  
**Eliza Perry** [i'laɪzə 'peri] Элиза Перри  
**Benny Stanfield** ['beni 'stænfɪld] Бенни Стэнфильд  
**Mrs Blithers** ['mɪsɪz 'bliðəz] миссис Блитерс  
**Captain Spooner** ['kæptɪn 'spu:nə] капитан Спунер  
**Waters** ['wɔ:təz] Уотерс  
**Mr Ricketts** ['mɪstə 'rɪkɪts] мистер Рикетс