

CO: *(looking at Tum Tum)* There she goes! To think how entirely my future happiness is wrapped up in that little parcel. Really! It hardly seems worthwhile! Oh, matrimony –

*(enter pooh Bah and Chris Tush)*

CHRIS: Excuse me...

CO: What is it now? Can't you see I'm soliloquizing? You have interrupted my monologue, sir!

CHRIS: I am the bearer of a letter from His Majesty.

CO: *(taking letter)* A letter from His MAJESTY?! What in the world can he have to say to me? *(reads letter)* Ah, I thought this would come sooner or later. His Majesty is struck by the fact that there have been no executions in Ti-Tea-Pu for a year, and decrees that unless somebody is beheaded within a month, the post of Lord High Executioner shall be abolished and the city reduced to the rank of village!

CHRIS: But that will ruin all of us!

CO: Yes, no way round that. I shall have to execute someone at once. The only question is... who?

POOH: It seems unkind to say so, but as you're already under sentence of death for flirting, everything seems to point to you.

CO: To me? What are you talking about? I can't execute myself!

POOH: Why not?

CO: Because in the first place, Self-Decapitation is an extremely difficult, not to say dangerous thing to attempt. It's suicide and suicide is a capital offence!

- POOH: That is so.
- CHRIS: We might make a note of that.
- POOH: It could be argued six months from now in the Supreme Court.
- CO: Besides, how can a man cut off his own head?
- POOH: One could try.
- CHRIS: Even if you only succeeded in cutting it half off, that would be something.
- POOH: Could be considered a Half Off Sale, of sorts.
- CHRIS: Like earnest money of your desire to comply with the Imperial will.
- CO: No. Excuse me, but there I am Adamant. As official Headsman, my reputation is at stake and I can't consent to embark on a professional operation unless I see my way to a successful result.
- POOH: That's highly creditable of you, but it places us in a very awkward position.
- CO: The awkwardness of your position is grace compared to mine, trying to cut off my own head.
- POOH: I'm afraid, that unless you can find a substitute—
- CO: A substitute? Oh, yes, nothing easier! (*to pooh Bah*) I appoint you Lord High Substitute.
- POOH: I would be delighted. It will realize my fondest dreams! But no, at any sacrifice, I must set bounds on my boundless ambition!