

Westinghouse Patent Pend. and Friends

Adam Dumphy

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Adam Dumphy's *Westinghouse Patent Pend. and Friends* has nothing to do with light bulbs and everything to do with dim bulbs. A rollicking farcical depiction of a bumptious 18-year-old catapulted into the world by his Ma to seek his fortune in and around Depression era San Diego this book's a grin-a-minute odyssey of mostly low-brow humour. Full of puns malapropisms double entendres and sexual innuendos it lives up to the author's aim of writing "a cheerful comedy." In fact it's a *Beverly Hillbillies* on steroids.

In Ma Ainstruther's brood of oddly named kids—Forecastle Roentgen Majestic Capitol Unearthly and Tillywort—a moniker like *Westinghouse Patent Pend.* fits right in especially when it's a.k.a. "Wes." Nor does it seem unusual for the former circus aerialist whose husband died when he missed the net and landed in the lap of a floozie he was eyeballing to send her second oldest son to make his fortune "like Horatio Algae" as Wes would say. While Wes doesn't have any formal schooling he does have a head full of stories and sayings gleaned from his Uncle Abernathy's extensive collection. Wes can mangle words with the best of them and he's puppy-like friendly and personable.

He's also loyally committed to his skinny-Minnie two-timing girlfriend Aramantha—at least until he rescues a more full-bodied short-skirted Alyce from a flat tire and the unwanted advances of a gang of would-be banditos. Alyce re-named Philco or "Phil" by Wes soon develops a passion for wanting to feel more than the muscles in his arm. Wes as naive as a newborn is more interested in finding ways to make his fortune.

To help Wes with his quest Alyce/Phil invites him home to meet her own personal *Addams Family*: Pa a.k.a. Thomas Jefferson Jefferson Appleby; her story-telling gun-toting Uncle Billy; the blubbing cousin Bernice who peels potatoes by the bushel basket while lamenting the loss of her husband Pierre a French master chef kidnapped to work in a gangster's roadside gambling house eventually the site of a pitched battle between the Appleby's forces of good and the double-dealing on-site demons.

Before the brouhaha boils over however Wes and Alyce/Phil find a common interest in making money from antiques. They engage in several comical episodes of buying and selling as they shuttle back and forth into Mexico in their aptly named truck "Clatter" collecting for their shop "Clutter's Last Stand." Through their travels they meet another assortment of odd-bods—cops and immigration officers on the take antique dealers as crooked as the legs of their tables a hodgepodge of homeless animals and birds and the gangster boss Louis the Lyme from the roadside clip joint angered by Alyce/Phil's refusal to sell him a piece of movie memorabilia. The "offer he couldn't refuse" precipitates the battle that draws the novel to its "happy-ever-after" resolution.

A well-constructed comedy with consistently funny characters in slapstick situations *Westinghouse Patent Pend. and Friends* should deservedly expand Adam Dumphy's circle of friends. Easy to read as well with its double-spaced layout.

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