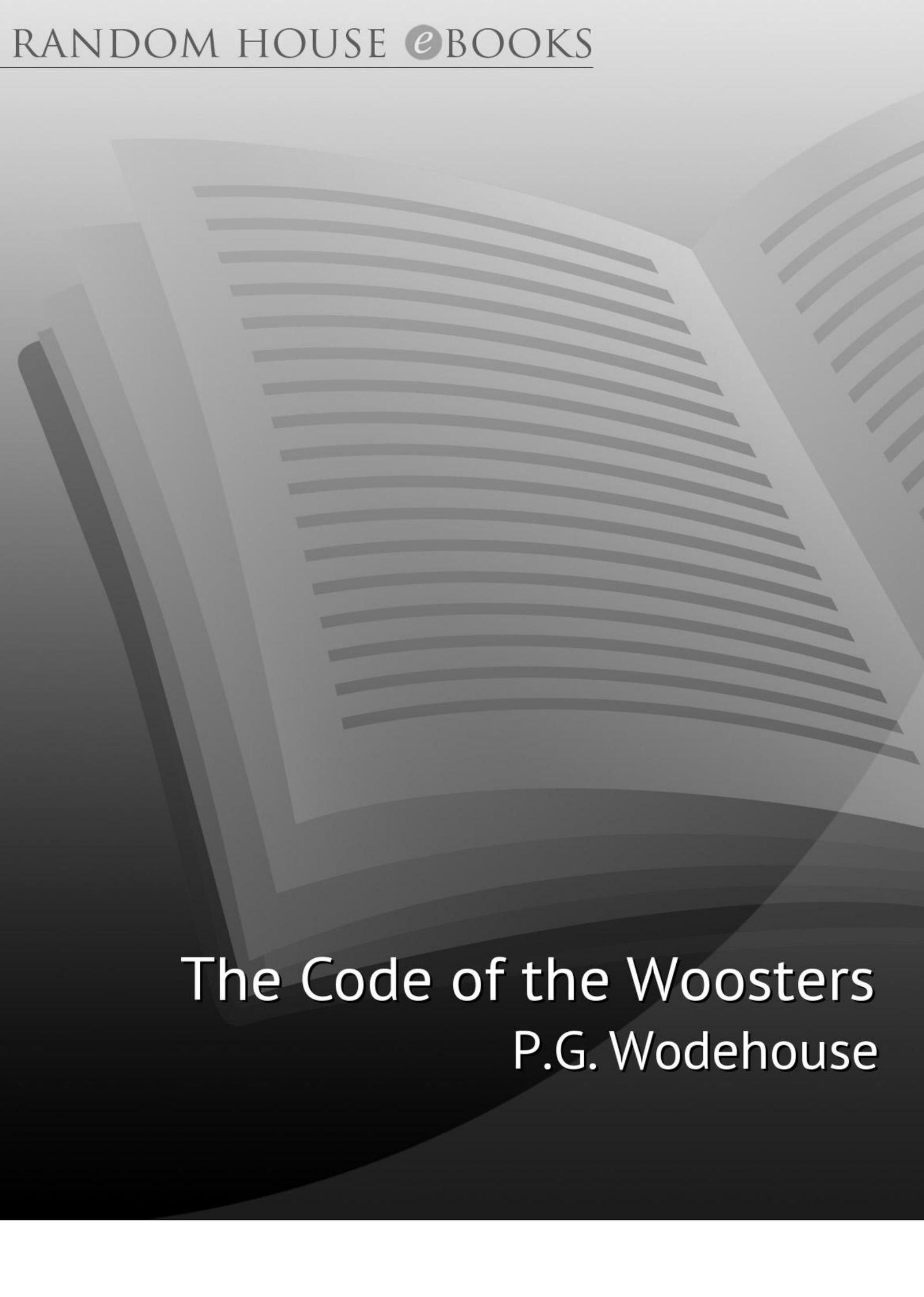


RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS

---



The Code of the Woosters  
P.G. Wodehouse

# Contents

---

About the Book

About the Author

Also by P.G. Wodehouse

Title Page

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Chapter 13

Chapter 14

Copyright

### *A Jeeves and Wooster novel*

When Bertie Wooster goes to Totleigh Towers to pour oil on the troubled waters of a lover's breach between Madeline Bassett and Gussie Fink-Nottle, he isn't expecting to see Aunt Dahlia there – nor be instructed by her to steal some silver. But purloining the antique cow creamer from under the baleful nose of Sir Watkyn Bassett is the least of Bertie's tasks. He has to restore true love to both Madeline and Gussie and to the Revd Stinker Pinker and Stiffy Byng – and confound the insatiable ambitions of would-be Dictator Roderick Spode and his Black Shorts. It's a situation that only Jeeves can unravel . . .

## About the Author

---

The author of almost a hundred books and the creator of Jeeves, Blandings Castle, Psmith, Ukridge, Uncle Fred and Mr Mulliner, P.G. Wodehouse was born in 1881 and educated at Dulwich College. After two years with the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank he became a full-time writer, contributing to a variety of periodicals including *Punch* and the *Globe*. He married in 1914. As well as his novels and short stories, he wrote lyrics for musical comedies with Guy Bolton and Jerome Kern, and at one time had five musicals running simultaneously on Broadway. His time in Hollywood also provided much source material for fiction.

At the age of 93, in the New Year's Honours List of 1975, he received a long-overdue knighthood, only to die on St Valentine's Day some 45 days later.

Fiction

*Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*  
*The Adventures of Sally*  
*Bachelors Anonymous*  
*Barmy in Wonderland*  
*Big Money*  
*Bill the Conqueror*  
*Blandings Castle and Elsewhere*  
*Carry On, Jeeves*  
*The Clicking of Cuthbert*  
*Cocktail Time*  
*The Coming of Bill*  
*Company for Henry*  
*A Damsel in Distress*  
*Do Butlers Burgle Banks*  
*Doctor Sally*  
*Eggs, Beans and Crumpets*  
*A Few Quick Ones*  
*French Leave*  
*Frozen Assets*  
*Full Moon*  
*Galahad at Blandings*  
*A Gentleman of Leisure*  
*The Girl in Blue*  
*The Girl on the Boat*  
*The Gold Bat*  
*The Head of Kay's*  
*The Heart of a Goof*  
*Heavy Weather*  
*Hot Water*  
*Ice in the Bedroom*  
*If I Were You*  
*Indiscretions of Archie*  
*The Inimitable Jeeves*  
*Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*  
*Jeeves in the Offing*  
*Jill the Reckless*  
*Joy in the Morning*  
*Laughing Gas*  
*Leave it to Psmith*  
*The Little Nugget*  
*Lord Emsworth and Others*  
*Louder and Funnier*

*Love Among the Chickens*  
*The Luck of Bodkins*  
*The Man Upstairs*  
*The Man with Two Left Feet*  
*The Mating Season*  
*Meet Mr Mulliner*  
*Mike and Psmith*  
*Mike at Wrykyn*  
*Money for Nothing*  
*Money in the Bank*  
*Mr Mulliner Speaking*  
*Much Obliged, Jeeves*  
*Mulliner Nights*  
*Not George Washington*  
*Nothing Serious*  
*The Old Reliable*  
*Pearls, Girls and Monty Bodkin*  
*A Pelican at Blandings*  
*Piccadilly Jim*  
*Pigs Have Wings*  
*Plum Pie*  
*The Pothunters*  
*A Prefect's Uncle*  
*The Prince and Betty*  
*Psmith, Journalist*  
*Psmith in the City*  
*Quick Service*  
*Right Ho, Jeeves*  
*Ring for Jeeves*  
*Sam the Sudden*  
*Service with a Smile*  
*The Small Bachelor*  
*Something Fishy*  
*Something Fresh*  
*Spring Fever*  
*Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves*  
*Summer Lightning*  
*Summer Moonshine*  
*Sunset at Blandings*  
*The Swoop*  
*Tales of St Austin's*  
*Thank You, Jeeves*  
*Ukridge*  
*Uncle Dynamite*  
*Uncle Fred in the Springtime*  
*Uneasy Money*  
*Very Good, Jeeves*

*The White Feather*  
*William Tell Told Again*  
*Young Men in Spats*

---

Omnibuses

*The World of Blandings*  
*The World of Jeeves*  
*The World of Mr Mulliner*  
*The World of Psmith*  
*The World of Ukridge*  
*The World of Uncle Fred*  
*Wodehouse Nuggets* (edited by Richard Usborne)  
*The World of Wodehouse Clergy*  
*The Hollywood Omnibus*  
*Weekend Wodehouse*

Paperback Omnibuses

*The Golf Omnibus*  
*The Aunts Omnibus*  
*The Drones Omnibus*  
*The Jeeves Omnibus 1*  
*The Jeeves Omnibus 3*

Poems

*The Parrot and Other Poems*

Autobiographical

*Wodehouse on Wodehouse*  
(comprising *Bring on the Girls*, *Over Seventy*, *Performing Flea*)

Letters

*Yours, Plum*

# The Code of the Woosters

---

P.G. Wodehouse



# CHAPTER 1

---

I REACHED OUT a hand from under the blankets, and rang the bell for Jeeves.

‘Good evening, Jeeves.’

‘Good morning, sir.’

This surprised me.

‘Is it morning?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Are you sure? It seems very dark outside.’

‘There is a fog, sir. If you will recollect, we are now in Autumn – season of mists and mellow fruitfulness.’

‘Season of what?’

‘Mists, sir, and mellow fruitfulness.’

‘Oh? Yes. Yes, I see. Well, be that as it may, get me one of those bracers of yours, will you?’

‘I have one in readiness, sir, in the ice-box.’

He shimmered out, and I sat up in bed with that rather unpleasant feeling you get sometimes that you’re going to die in about five minutes. On the previous night, I had given a little dinner at the Drones to Gussie Fink-Nottle as a friendly send-off before his approaching nuptials with Madeline, only daughter of Sir Watkyn Bassett, CBE, and these things take their toll. Indeed, just before Jeeves came in, I had been dreaming that some boulder was driving spikes through my head – not just ordinary spikes, as used by Jael the wife of Heber, but red-hot ones.

He returned with the tissue-restorer. I loosed it down the hatch, and after undergoing the passing discomfort, unavoidable when you drink Jeeves’s patent morning revivers, of having the top of the skull fly up to the ceiling and the eyes shoot out of their sockets and rebound from the opposite wall like racquet balls, felt better. It would have been overstating it to say that even now Bertram was back again in mid-season form, but I had at least slid into the convalescent class and was equal to a spot of conversation.

‘Ha!’ I said, retrieving the eyeballs and replacing them in position. ‘Well, Jeeves, what goes on in the great world? Is that the paper you have there?’

‘No, sir. It is some literature from the Travel Bureau. I thought that you might care to glance at it.’

‘Oh?’ I said. ‘You did, did you?’

And there was a brief and – if that’s the word I want – pregnant silence.

I suppose that when two men of iron will live in close association with one another, there are bound to be occasional clashes, and one of these had recently popped up in the Wooster home. Jeeves was trying to get me to go on a Round-The-World cruise, and I would have none of it. But in spite of my firm statements to this effect, scarcely a day passed without him bringing me a sheaf or nosegay of those illustrated folders which the Ho-for-the-open-spaces birds send out in the hope of drumming up custom. His whole attitude recalled irresistibly to the mind that of some assiduous hound who will persist in laying a dead rat on the drawing-room carpet, though repeatedly apprised by word and gesture that the market for same is sluggish or even non-existent.

‘Jeeves,’ I said, ‘this nuisance must now cease.’

‘Travel is highly educational, sir.’

‘I can’t do with any more education. I was full up years ago. No, Jeeves, I know what’s the matter.’

with you. That old Viking strain of yours has come out again. You yearn for the tang of the sea breezes. You see yourself walking the deck in a yachting cap. Possibly someone has been telling you about the Dancing Girls of Bali. I understand, and I sympathize. But not for me. I refuse to be decanted into any blasted ocean-going liner and lugged off round the world.'

'Very good, sir.'

He spoke with a certain what-is-it in his voice, and I could see that, if not actually disgruntled, I was far from being grunted, so I tactfully changed the subject.

'Well, Jeeves, it was quite a satisfactory binge last night.'

'Indeed, sir?'

'Oh, most. An excellent time was had by all. Gussie sent his regards.'

'I appreciate the kind thought, sir. I trust Mr Fink-Nottle was in good spirits?'

'Extraordinarily good, considering that the sands are running out and that he will shortly have Sir Watkyn Bassett for a father-in-law. Sooner him than me, Jeeves, sooner him than me.'

I spoke with strong feeling, and I'll tell you why. A few months before, while celebrating Boat Race night, I had fallen into the clutches of the Law for trying to separate a policeman from his helmet, and after sleeping fitfully on a plank bed had been hauled up at Boshier Street next morning and fined five pounds of the best. The magistrate who had inflicted this monstrous sentence – to the accompaniment, I may add, of some very offensive remarks from the bench – was none other than old Pop Bassett, father of Gussie's bride-to-be.

As it turned out, I was one of his last customers, for a couple of weeks later he inherited a pot of money from a distant relative and retired to the country. That, at least, was the story that had been passed about. My own view was that he had got the stuff by sticking like glue to the fines. Five quid here, five quid there – you can see how it would mount up over a period of years.

'You have not forgotten that man of wrath, Jeeves? A hard case, eh?'

'Possibly Sir Watkyn is less formidable in private life, sir.'

'I doubt it. Slice him where you like, a hellhound is always a hellhound. But enough of this Bassett. Any letters today?'

'No, sir.'

'Telephone communications?'

'One, sir. From Mrs Travers.'

'Aunt Dahlia? She's back in town, then?'

'Yes, sir. She expressed a desire that you would ring her up at your earliest convenience.'

'I will do even better,' I said cordially. 'I will call in person.'

And half an hour later I was toddling up the steps of her residence and being admitted by one Seppings, her butler. Little knowing, as I crossed that threshold, that in about two shakes of a duck's tail I was to become involved in an imbroglio that would test the Wooster soul as it had seldom been tested before. I allude to the sinister affair of Gussie Fink-Nottle, Madeline Bassett, old Pop Bassett, Stiffy Byng, the Rev. H. P. ('Stinker') Pinker, the eighteenth-century cow-creamer and the small brown, leather-covered notebook.

No premonition of an impending doom, however, cast a cloud on my serenity as I buzzed in. I was looking forward with bright anticipation to the coming reunion with this Dahlia – she, as I may have mentioned before, being my good and deserving aunt, not to be confused with Aunt Agatha, who eats broken bottles and wears barbed wire next to the skin. Apart from the mere intellectual pleasure of chewing the fat with her, there was the glittering prospect that I might be able to cadge an invitation

lunch. And owing to the outstanding virtuosity of Anatole, her French cook, the browsing at her trough is always of a nature to lure the gourmet.

---

The door of the morning room was open as I went through the hall, and I caught a glimpse of Uncle Tom messing about with his collection of old silver. For a moment I toyed with the idea of pausing to pip-pip and enquire after his indigestion, a malady to which he is extremely subject, but wise counsels prevailed. This uncle is a bird who, sighting a nephew, is apt to buttonhole him and become a bit informative on the subject of sconces and foliation, not to mention scrolls, ribbon wreaths in high relief and gadroon borders, and it seemed to me that silence was best. I whizzed by, accordingly, with sealed lips, and headed for the library, where I had been informed that Aunt Dahlia was at the moment roosting.

I found the old flesh-and-blood up to her Marcel-wave in proof sheets. As all the world knows, she is the courteous and popular proprietress of a weekly sheet for the delicately nurtured entitled *Milady's Boudoir*. I once contributed an article to it on 'What The Well-Dressed Man Is Wearing'.

My entry caused her to come to the surface, and she greeted me with one of those cheery views halloos which, in the days when she went in for hunting, used to make her so noticeable a figure of the Quorn, the Pytchley and other organizations for doing the British fox a bit of no good.

'Hullo, ugly,' she said. 'What brings you here?'

'I understood, aged relative, that you wished to confer with me.'

'I didn't want you to come barging in, interrupting my work. A few words on the telephone would have met the case. But I suppose some instinct told you that this was my busy day.'

'If you were wondering if I could come to lunch, have no anxiety. I shall be delighted, as always. What will Anatole be giving us?'

'He won't be giving you anything, my gay young tapeworm. I am entertaining Pomona Grindle, the novelist, to the midday meal.'

'I should be charmed to meet her.'

'Well, you're not going to. It is to be a strictly *tête-à-tête* affair. I'm trying to get a serial out of her for the *Boudoir*. No, all I wanted was to tell you to go to an antique shop in the Brompton Road – it's just past the Oratory – you can't miss it – and sneer at a cow-creamer.'

I did not get her drift. The impression I received was that of an aunt talking through the back of her neck.

'Do what to a what?'

'They've got an eighteenth-century cow-creamer there that Tom's going to buy this afternoon.'

The scales fell from my eyes.

'Oh, it's a silver whatnot, is it?'

'Yes. A sort of cream jug. Go there and ask them to show it to you, and when they do, register your scorn.'

'The idea being what?'

'To sap their confidence, of course, chump. To sow doubts and misgivings in their mind and make them clip the price a bit. The cheaper he gets the thing, the better he will be pleased. And I want him to be in cheery mood, because if I succeed in signing the Grindle up for this serial, I shall be compelled to get into his ribs for a biggish sum of money. It's sinful what these best-selling women novelists want for their stuff. So pop off there without delay and shake your head at the thing.'

I am always anxious to oblige the right sort of aunt, but I was compelled to put in what Jeeves would have called a *nolle prosequi*. Those morning mixtures of his are practically magical in their effect, but even after partaking of them one does not oscillate the bean.

'I can't shake my head. Not today.'

She gazed at me with a censorious waggle of the right eyebrow.

'Oh, so that's how it is? Well, if your loathsome excesses have left you incapable of headshaking, you can at least curl your lip.'

'Oh, rather.'

'Then carry on. And draw your breath in sharply. Also try clicking the tongue. Oh, yes, and tell them you think it's Modern Dutch.'

'Why?'

'I don't know. Apparently it's something a cow-creamer ought not to be.'

She paused, and allowed her eye to roam thoughtfully over my perhaps somewhat corpse-like face.

'So you were out on the tiles last night, were you, my little chickadee? It's an extraordinary thing every time I see you, you appear to be recovering from some debauch. Don't you ever stop drinking? How about when you are asleep?'

I rebutted the slur.

'You wrong me, relative. Except at times of special revelry, I am exceedingly moderate in my indulgences. A brace of cocktails, a glass of wine at dinner and possibly a liqueur with the coffee – that is Bertram Wooster. But last night I gave a small bachelor binge for Gussie Fink-Nottle.'

'You did, did you?' She laughed – a bit louder than I could have wished in my frail state of health – but then she is always a woman who tends to bring plaster falling from the ceiling when amused. 'Spink-Bottle, eh? Bless his heart! How was the old newt-fancier?'

'Pretty roguish.'

'Did he make a speech at this orgy of yours?'

'Yes. I was astounded. I was all prepared for a blushing refusal. But no. We drank his health, and he rose to his feet as cool as some cucumbers, as Anatole would say, and held us spellbound.'

'Tight as an owl, I suppose?'

'On the contrary. Offensively sober.'

'Well, that's a nice change.'

We fell into a thoughtful silence. We were musing on the summer afternoon down at her place in Worcestershire when Gussie, circumstances having so ordered themselves as to render him full to the back teeth with the right stuff, had addressed the young scholars of Market Snodsbury Grammar School on the occasion of their annual prize giving.

A thing I never know, when I'm starting out to tell a story about a chap I've told a story about before, is how much explanation to bung in at the outset. It's a problem you've got to look at from every angle. I mean to say, in the present case, if I take it for granted that my public knows all about Gussie Fink-Nottle and just breeze ahead, those publicans who weren't hanging on my lips the first time are apt to be fogged. Whereas if before kicking off I give about eight volumes of the man's life and history, other bimbos who were so hanging will stifle yawns and murmur 'Old stuff. Get on with it.'

I suppose the only thing to do is to put the salient facts as briefly as possible in the possession of the first gang, waving an apologetic hand at the second gang the while, to indicate that they had better let their attention wander for a minute or two and that I will be with them shortly.

This Gussie, then, was a fish-faced pal of mine who, on reaching man's estate, had buried himself in the country and devoted himself entirely to the study of newts, keeping the little chaps in a glass tank and observing their habits with a sedulous eye. A confirmed recluse you would have called him, if you had happened to know the word, and you would have been right. By all the rulings of the form book,

less promising prospect for the whispering of tender words into shell-like ears and the subsequent purchase of platinum ring and licence for wedding it would have seemed impossible to discover in a month of Sundays.

But Love will find a way. Meeting Madeline Bassett one day and falling for her like a ton of brick he had emerged from his retirement and started to woo, and after numerous vicissitudes had clicked and was slated at no distant date to don the sponge-bag trousers and gardenia for buttonhole and walk up the aisle with the ghastly girl.

I call her a ghastly girl because she was a ghastly girl. The Woosters are chivalrous, but they can't speak their minds. A droopy, soupy, sentimental exhibit, with melting eyes and a cooing voice and the most extraordinary views on such things as stars and rabbits. I remember her telling me once that the rabbits were gnomes in attendance on the Fairy Queen and that the stars were God's daisy chain. Perfect rot, of course. They're nothing of the sort.

Aunt Dahlia emitted a low, rumbling chuckle, for that speech of Gussie's down at Mark Twain Snodsbury has always been one of her happiest memories.

'Good old Spink-Bottle! Where is he now?'

'Staying at the Bassett's father's place – Totleigh Towers, Totleigh-in-the-Wold, Glos. He went back there this morning. They're having the wedding at the local church.'

'Are you going to it?'

'Definitely no.'

'No, I suppose it would be too painful for you. You being in love with the girl.'

I stared.

'In love? With a female who thinks that every time a fairy blows its wee nose a baby is born?'

'Well, you were certainly engaged to her once.'

'For about five minutes, yes, and through no fault of my own. My dear old relative,' I said, nettled, 'you are perfectly well aware of the inside facts of that frightful affair.'

I winced. It was an incident in my career on which I did not care to dwell. Briefly, what had occurred was this. His nerve sapped by long association with newts, Gussie had shrunk from pleading his cause with Madeline Bassett, and had asked me to plead it for him. And when I did so, the fair-headed girl thought I was pleading mine. With the result that when, after that exhibition of his at the prize giving, she handed Gussie the temporary mitten, she had attached herself to me, and I had had no option but to take the rap. I mean to say, if a girl has got it into her nut that a fellow loves her, and she comes and tells him that she is returning her *fiancé* to store and is now prepared to sign up with him, what can a chap do?

Mercifully, things had been straightened out at the eleventh hour by a reconciliation between the two pills, but the thought of my peril was one at which I still shuddered. I wasn't going to feel really easy in my mind till the parson had said: 'Wilt thou, Augustus?' and Gussie had whispered a shuffling 'Yes.'

'Well, if it is of any interest to you,' said Aunt Dahlia, 'I am not proposing to attend that wedding myself. I disapprove of Sir Watkyn Bassett, and don't think he ought to be encouraged. There's one of the boys, if you want one!'

'You know the old crumb, then?' I said, rather surprised, though of course it bore out what I often say – viz. that it's a small world.

'Yes, I know him. He's a friend of Tom's. They both collect old silver and snarl at one another like wolves about it all the time. We had him staying at Brinkley last month. And would you care to hear how he repaid me for all the loving care I lavished on him while he was my guest? Sneaked round

behind my back and tried to steal Anatole!’

‘No!’

‘That’s what he did. Fortunately, Anatole proved staunch – after I had doubled his wages.’

‘Double them again,’ I said earnestly. ‘Keep on doubling them. Pour out money like water rather than lose that superb master of the roasts and hashes.’

I was visibly affected. The thought of Anatole, that peerless disher-up, coming within an ace of ceasing to operate at Brinkley Court, where I could always enjoy his output by inviting myself for a visit, and going off to serve under old Bassett, the last person in the world likely to set out a knife and fork for Bertram, had stirred me profoundly.

‘Yes,’ said Aunt Dahlia, her eye smouldering as she brooded on the frightful thing, ‘that’s the sort of hornswoggling high-binder Sir Watkyn Bassett is. You had better warn Spink-Bottle to watch out on the wedding day. The slightest relaxation of vigilance, and the old thug will probably get away with his tie-pin in the vestry. And now,’ she said, reaching out for what had the appearance of being a thoughtful essay on the care of the baby in sickness and in health, ‘push off. I’ve got about six tons of proofs to correct. Oh, and give this to Jeeves, when you see him. It’s the “Husbands’ Corner” article. It’s full of deep stuff about braid on the side of men’s dress trousers, and I’d like him to vet it. For all I know, it may be Red propaganda. And I can rely on you not to bungle that job? Tell me in your own words what it is you’re supposed to do.’

‘Go to antique shop –’

‘– in the Brompton Road –’

‘– in, as you say, the Brompton Road. Ask to see cow-creamer –’

‘– and sneer. Right. Buzz along. The door is behind you.’

It was with a light heart that I went out into the street and hailed a passing barouche. Many men, no doubt, might have been a bit sick at having their morning cut into in this fashion, but I was conscious only of pleasure at the thought that I had it in my power to perform this little act of kindness. Scratch Bertram Wooster, I often say, and you find a Boy Scout.

The antique shop in the Brompton Road proved, as foreshadowed, to be an antique shop in the Brompton Road and, like all antique shops except the swanky ones in the Bond Street neighbourhood, dingy outside and dark and smelly within. I don’t know why it is, but the proprietors of the establishments always seem to be cooking some sort of stew in the back room.

‘I say,’ I began, entering; then paused as I perceived that the bloke in charge was attending to two other customers.

‘Oh, sorry,’ I was about to add, to convey the idea that I had horned in inadvertently, when the words froze on my lips.

Quite a slab of misty fruitfulness had drifted into the emporium, obscuring the view, but in spite of the poor light I was able to note that the smaller and elder of these two customers was no stranger to me.

It was old Pop Bassett in person. Himself. Not a picture.

There is a tough, bulldog strain in the Woosters which has often caused comment. It came out in me now. A weaker man, no doubt, would have tiptoed from the scene and headed for the horizon, but I stood firm. After all, I felt, the dead past was the dead past. By forking out that fiver, I had paid my debt to Society and had nothing to fear from this shrimp-faced son of a whatnot. So I remained where I was, giving him the surreptitious once-over.

My entry had caused him to turn and shoot a quick look at me, and at intervals since then he had been peering at me sideways. It was only a question of time, I felt, before the hidden chord in his memory would be touched and he would realize that the slight, distinguished-looking figure leaning on its umbrella in the background was an old acquaintance. And now it was plain that he was hep. The bird in charge of the shop had potted off into an inner room, and he came across to where I stood giving me the up-and-down through his wind-shields.

‘Hullo, hullo,’ he said. ‘I know you, young man. I never forget a face. You came up before me once.’

I bowed slightly.

‘But not twice. Good! Learned your lesson, eh? Going straight now? Capital. Now, let me see, what was it? Don’t tell me. It’s coming back. Of course, yes. Bag-snatching.’

‘No, no. It was –’

‘Bag-snatching,’ he repeated firmly. ‘I remember it distinctly. Still, it’s all past and done with now, eh? We have turned over a new leaf, have we not? Splendid. Roderick, come over here. This is most interesting.’

His buddy, who had been examining a salver, put it down and joined the party.

He was, as I had already been able to perceive, a breath-taking cove. About seven feet in height, and swathed in a plaid ulster which made him look about six feet across, he caught the eye and arrested the ear. It was as if Nature had intended to make a gorilla, and had changed its mind at the last moment.

But it wasn’t merely the sheer expanse of the bird that impressed. Close to, what you noticed most was his face, which was square and powerful and slightly moustached towards the centre. His gaze was keen and piercing. I don’t know if you have even seen those pictures in the papers of Dictator with tilted chins and blazing eyes, inflaming the populace with fiery words on the occasion of the opening of a new skittle alley, but that was what he reminded me of.

‘Roderick,’ said old Bassett, ‘I want you to meet this fellow. Here is a case which illustrates exactly what I have so often maintained – that prison life does not degrade, that it does not warp the character and prevent a man rising on stepping-stones of his dead self to higher things.’

I recognized the gag – one of Jeeves’s – and wondered where he could have heard it.

‘Look at this chap. I gave him three months not long ago for snatching bags at railway stations, and it is quite evident that his term in jail has had the most excellent effect on him. He has reformed.’

‘Oh, yes?’ said the Dictator.

Granted that it wasn’t quite ‘Oh, yeah?’ I still didn’t like the way he spoke. He was looking at me with a nasty sort of supercilious expression. I remember thinking that he would have been the ideal man to sneer at a cow-creamer.

‘What makes you think he has reformed?’

‘Of course he has reformed. Look at him. Well groomed, well dressed, a decent member of Society. What his present walk in life is, I do not know, but it is perfectly obvious that he is no longer stealing bags. What are you doing now, young man?’

‘Stealing umbrellas, apparently,’ said the Dictator. ‘I notice he’s got yours.’

And I was on the point of denying the accusation hotly – I had, indeed, already opened my lips to do so – when there suddenly struck me like a blow on the upper maxillary from a sock stuffed with wool and sand the realization that there was a lot in it.

I mean to say, I remembered now that I had come out without my umbrella, and yet here I was beyond any question of doubt, umbrellaed to the gills. What had caused me to take up the one that had been leaning against a seventeenth-century chair, I cannot say, unless it was the primeval instinct.

which makes a man without an umbrella reach out for the nearest one in sight, like a flower groping toward the sun.

---

A manly apology seemed in order. I made it as the blunt instrument changed hands.

‘I say, I’m most frightfully sorry.’

Old Bassett said he was, too – sorry and disappointed. He said it was this sort of thing that made man sick at heart.

The Dictator had to shove his oar in. He asked if he should call a policeman, and old Bassett’s eyes gleamed for a moment. Being a magistrate makes you love the idea of calling policemen. It’s like a tiger tasting blood. But he shook his head.

‘No, Roderick. I couldn’t. Not today – the happiest day of my life.’

The Dictator pursed his lips, as if feeling that the better the day, the better the deed.

‘But listen,’ I bleated, ‘it was a mistake.’

‘Ha!’ said the Dictator.

‘I thought that umbrella was mine.’

‘That,’ said old Bassett, ‘is the fundamental trouble with you, my man. You are totally unable to distinguish between *meum* and *tuum*. Well, I am not going to have you arrested this time, but I advise you to be very careful. Come, Roderick.’

They biffed out, the Dictator pausing at the door to give me another look and say ‘Ha!’ again.

A most unnerving experience all this had been for a man of sensibility, as you may imagine, and my immediate reaction was a disposition to give Aunt Dahlia’s commission the miss-in-balk and return to the flat and get outside another of Jeeves’s pick-me-ups. You know how harts pant for cooling streams when heated in the chase. Very much that sort of thing. I realized now what madness it had been to go into the streets of London with only one of them under my belt, and I was on the point of melting away and going back to the fountain head, when the proprietor of the shop emerged from the inn room, accompanied by a rich smell of stew and a sandy cat, and enquired what he could do for me. And so, the subject having come up, I said that I understood that he had an eighteenth-century cow-creamer for sale.

He shook his head. He was a rather mildewed bird of gloomy aspect, almost entirely concealed behind a cascade of white whiskers.

‘You’re too late. It’s promised to a customer.’

‘Name of Travers?’

‘Ah.’

‘Then that’s all right. Learn, O thou of unshuffled features and agreeable disposition,’ I said, for one likes to be civil, ‘that the above Travers is my uncle. He sent me here to have a look at the thing. So dig it out, will you? I expect it’s rotten.’

‘It’s a beautiful cow-creamer.’

‘Ha!’ I said, borrowing a bit of the Dictator’s stuff. ‘That’s what you think. We shall see.’

I don’t mind confessing that I’m not much of a lad for old silver, and though I have never pained him by actually telling him so, I have always felt that Uncle Tom’s fondness for it is evidence of a goofiness which he would do well to watch and check before it spreads. So I wasn’t expecting the heart to leap up to any great extent at the sight of this exhibit. But when the whiskered ancients pattered off into the shadows and came back with the thing, I scarcely knew whether to laugh or weep. The thought of an uncle paying hard cash for such an object got right in amongst me.

It was a silver cow. But when I say ‘cow’, don’t go running away with the idea of some decent, self-respecting cudster such as you may observe loading grass into itself in the nearest meadow. This was

sinister, leering, Underworld sort of animal, the kind that would spit out of the side of its mouth for two pence. It was about four inches high and six long. Its back opened on a hinge. Its tail was arched so that the tip touched the spine – thus, I suppose, affording a handle for the cream-lover to grasp. The sight of it seemed to take me into a different and dreadful world.

It was, consequently, an easy task for me to carry out the programme indicated by Aunt Dahlia. I curled the lip and clicked the tongue, all in one movement. I also drew in the breath sharply. The whole effect was that of a man absolutely out of sympathy with this cow-creamer, and I saw the mildewed cove start, as if he had been wounded in a tender spot.

‘Oh, tut, tut, tut!’ I said, ‘Oh, dear, dear, dear! Oh, no, no, no, no, no! I don’t think much of this,’ I said, curling and clicking freely. ‘All wrong.’

‘All wrong?’

‘All wrong. Modern Dutch.’

‘Modern Dutch?’ He may have frothed at the mouth, or he may not. I couldn’t be sure. But the agony of spirit was obviously intense. ‘What do you mean, Modern Dutch? It’s eighteenth-century English. Look at the hallmark.’

‘I can’t see any hallmark.’

‘Are you blind? Here, take it outside in the street. It’s lighter there.’

‘Right ho,’ I said, and started for the door, sauntering at first in a languid sort of way, like a connoisseur a bit bored at having his time wasted.

I say ‘at first’, because I had only taken a couple of steps when I tripped over the cat, and you can combine tripping over cats with languid sauntering. Shifting abruptly into high, I shot out of the door like someone wanted by the police making for the car after a smash-and-grab raid. The cow-cream flew from my hands, and it was a lucky thing that I happened to barge into a fellow citizen outside, or I should have taken a toss in the gutter.

Well, not absolutely lucky, as a matter of fact, for it turned out to be Sir Watkyn Bassett. He stood there goggling at me with horror and indignation behind the pince-nez, and you could almost see him totting up the score on his fingers. First, bag-snatching, I mean to say; then umbrella-pinching; and now this. His whole demeanour was that of a man confronted with the last straw.

‘Call a policeman, Roderick!’ he cried, skipping like the high hills.

The Dictator sprang to the task.

‘Police!’ he bawled.

‘Police!’ yipped old Bassett, up in the tenor clef.

‘Police!’ roared the Dictator, taking the bass.

And a moment later something large loomed up in the fog and said: ‘What’s all this?’

Well, I dare say I could have explained everything, if I had stuck around and gone into it, but I didn’t want to stick around and go into it. Side-stepping nimbly, I picked up the feet and was gone like the wind. A voice shouted ‘Stop!’ but of course I didn’t. Stop, I mean to say! Of all the damn silly ideas. I legged it down byways and along side streets, and eventually fetched up somewhere in the neighbourhood of Sloane Square. There I got aboard a cab and started back to civilization.

My original intention was to drive to the Drones and get a bite of lunch there, but I hadn’t gone far when I realized that I wasn’t equal to it. I yield to no man in my appreciation of the Drones Club . . . its sparkling conversation, its camaraderie, its atmosphere redolent of all that is best and brightest in the metropolis . . . but there would, I knew, be a goodish bit of bread thrown hither and thither at my luncheon table, and I was in no vein to cope with flying bread. Changing my strategy in a flash, I told the man to take me to the nearest Turkish bath.

It is always my practice to linger over a Turkish b., and it was consequently getting late by the time I returned to the flat. I had managed to put in two or three hours' sleep in my cubicle, and that, taken in conjunction with the healing flow of persp. in the hot room and the plunge into the icy tank, had brought the roses back to my cheeks to no little extent. It was, indeed, practically with a merry trill on my lips that I latchkeyed my way in and made for the sitting room.

And the next moment my fizziness was turned off at the main by the sight of a pile of telegrams on the table.

## CHAPTER 2

---

I DON'T KNOW if you were among the gang that followed the narrative of my earlier adventures with Gussie Fink-Nottle – you may have been one of those who didn't happen to get around to it – but if you were you will recall that the dirty work on that occasion started with a tidal wave of telegrams and you will not be surprised to learn that I found myself eyeing this mound of envelopes askance. Ever since then, telegrams in any quantity have always seemed to me to spell trouble.

I had had the idea at first glance that there were about twenty of the beastly things, but a close scrutiny revealed only three. They had all been despatched from Totleigh-in-the-Wold, and they all bore the same signature.

They ran as follows:

The first:

Wooster,  
Berkeley Mansions,  
Berkeley Square,  
London.  
Come immediately. Serious rift Madeline and self. Reply.

*Gussie*

The second:

Surprised receive no answer my telegram saying Come immediately serious rift Madeline and self. Reply.

*Gussie*

And the third:

I say, Bertie, why don't you answer my telegrams? Sent you two today saying Come immediately serious rift Madeline and self. Unless you come earliest possible moment prepared lend every effort effect reconciliation, wedding will be broken off. Reply.

*Gussie*

I have said that that sojourn of mine in the T. bath had done much to re-establish the *mens sana in corpore* whatnot. Perusal of these frightful communications brought about an instant relapse. My misgivings, I saw, had been well founded. Something had whispered to me on seeing those balustraded envelopes that here we were again, and here we were.

The sound of the familiar footsteps had brought Jeeves floating out from the back premises. A glance was enough to tell him that all was not well with ye employer.

'Are you ill, sir?' he enquired solicitously.

I sank into a chair and passed an agitated hour over the business.

'Not ill, Jeeves, but all of a twitter. Read these.'

He ran his eye over the dossier, then transferred it to mine, and I could read in it the respectful anxiety he was feeling for the well-being of the young seigneur.

'Most disturbing, sir.'

His voice was grave. I could see that he hadn't missed the gist. The sinister import of the

telegrams was as clear to him as it was to me.

~~We do not, of course, discuss the matter, for to do so would rather come under the head of speaking~~ lightly of a woman's name, but Jeeves is in full possession of the facts relating to the Bassett-Wooster mix-up and thoroughly cognizant of the peril which threatens me from that quarter. There was no need to explain to him why I now lighted a feverish cigarette and hitched the lower jaw up with a visible effort.

'What do you suppose has happened, Jeeves?'

'It is difficult to hazard a conjecture, sir.'

'The wedding may be scratched, he says. Why? That is what I ask myself.'

'Yes, sir.'

'And I have no doubt that that is what you ask yourself?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Deep waters, Jeeves.'

'Extremely deep, sir.'

'The only thing we can say with any certainty is that in some way – how, we shall presumably learn later – Gussie has made an ass of himself again.'

I mused on Augustus Fink-Nottle for a moment, recalling how he had always stood by himself in the chump class. The best judges had been saying it for years. Why, at our private school, where I had first met him, he had been known as 'Fat-head', and that was in competition with fellows like Bing Little, Freddie Widgeon and myself.

'What shall I do, Jeeves?'

'I think it would be best to proceed to Totleigh Towers, sir.'

'But how can I? Old Bassett would sling me out the moment I arrived.'

'Possibly if you were to telegraph to Mr Fink-Nottle, sir, explaining your difficulty, he might have some solution to suggest.'

This seemed sound. I hastened out to the post office, and wired as follows:

Fink-Nottle,  
Totleigh Towers,  
Totleigh-in-the-Wold.

Yes, that's all very well. You say come here immediately, but how dickens can I? You don't understand relations between Pop Bassett and self. These not such as to make him welcome visit Bertram. Would inevitably hurl out on ear and set dogs on. Useless suggest putting on false whiskers and pretending be fellow come inspect drains, as old blighter familiar with features and would instantly detect imposture. What is to be done? What has happened? Why serious rift? What serious rift? How do you mean wedding broken off? Why dickens? What have you been doing to the girl? Reply.

*Bertie*

The answer to this came during dinner:

Wooster,  
Berkeley Mansions,  
Berkeley Square,  
London.

See difficulty, but think can work it. In spite strained relations, still speaking terms Madeline. Am telling her have received urgent letter from you pleading be allowed come here. Expect invitation shortly.

*Gussie*

And on the morrow, after a tossing-on-pillow night, I received a bag of three.

The first ran:

Have worked it. Invitation dispatched. When you come, will you bring book entitled *My Friends The Newts* by Loretta Peabody published Popgood and Grooly get any bookshop.

---

Gussie

The second:

Bertie, you old ass, I hear you are coming here. Delighted, as something very important want you do for me.

Stiffy

The third:

Please come here if you wish, but, oh Bertie, is this wise? Will not it cause you needless pain seeing me? Surely merely twisting knife wound.

Madeline

Jeeves was bringing me the morning cup of tea when I read these missives, and I handed them to him in silence. He read them in same. I was able to imbibe about a fluid ounce of the hot and strengthening before he spoke.

‘I think that we should start at once, sir.’

‘I suppose so.’

‘I will pack immediately. Would you wish me to call Mrs Travers on the telephone?’

‘Why?’

‘She has rung up several times this morning.’

‘Oh? Then perhaps you had better give her a buzz.’

‘I think it will not be necessary, sir. I fancy that this would be the lady now.’

A long and sustained peal had sounded from the front door, as if an aunt had put her thumb on the button and kept it there. Jeeves left the presence, and a moment later it was plain that his intuition had not deceived him. A booming voice rolled through the flat, the voice which once, when announcing the advent of a fox in their vicinity, had been wont to cause members of the Quorn and Pytchley to clutch their hats and bound in their saddles.

‘Isn’t that young hound awake yet, Jeeves? . . . Oh, there you are.’

Aunt Dahlia charged across the threshold.

At all times and on all occasions, owing to years of fox-chivvying in every kind of weather, the relative has a fairly purple face, but one noted now an even deeper mauve than usual. The breath came jerkily, and the eyes gleamed with a goofy light. A man with far less penetration than Bertram Wooster would have been able to divine that there before him stood an aunt who had got the pip about something.

It was evident that information which she yearned to uncork was bubbling within her, but she postponed letting it go for a moment in order to reproach me for being in bed at such an hour. Sunk, as she termed it in her forthright way, in hoggish slumber.

‘Not sunk in hoggish slumber,’ I corrected. ‘I’ve been awake some little time. As a matter of fact, I was just about to partake of the morning meal. You will join me, I hope? Bacon and eggs may be taken as read, but say the word and we can do you a couple of kippers.’

She snorted with a sudden violence which twenty-four hours earlier would have unmanned me completely. Even in my present tolerably robust condition, it affected me rather like one of those gas explosions which slay six.

‘Eggs! Kippers! What I want is a brandy and soda. Tell Jeeves to mix me one. And if he forgets to put in the soda, it will be all right with me. Bertie, a frightful thing has happened.’

‘Push along into the dining saloon, my fluttering old aspen,’ I said. ‘We shall not be interrupted there. Jeeves will want to come in here to pack.’

‘Are you off somewhere?’

‘Totleigh Towers. I have had a most disturbing –’

‘Totleigh Towers? Well, I’m dashed! That’s just where I came to tell you you had jolly well got to go immediately.’

‘Eh?’

‘Matter of life and death.’

‘How do you mean?’

‘You’ll soon see, when I’ve explained.’

‘Then come along to the dining room and explain at your earliest convenience.’

‘Now then, my dear old mysterious hinter,’ I said, when Jeeves had brought the foodstuffs and withdrawn, ‘tell me all.’

For an instant, there was silence, broken only by the musical sound of an aunt drinking brandy and soda and self lowering a cup of coffee. Then she put down her beaker, and drew a deep breath.

‘Bertie,’ she said, ‘I wish to begin by saying a few words about Sir Watkyn Bassett, CBE. May he greenfly attack his roses. May his cook get tight on the night of the big dinner party. May all his hens get the staggers.’

‘Does he keep hens?’ I said, putting a point.

‘May his cistern start leaking, and may white ants, if there are any in England, gnaw away the foundations of Totleigh Towers. And when he walks up the aisle with his daughter Madeline, to give her away to that ass Spink-Bottle, may he get a sneezing fit and find that he has come out without a pocket handkerchief.’

She paused, and it seemed to me that all this, while spirited stuff, was not germane to the issue.

‘Quite,’ I said. ‘I agree with you *in toto*. But what has he done?’

‘I will tell you. You remember that cow-creamer?’

I dug into a fried egg, quivering a little.

‘Remember it? I shall never forget it. You will scarcely believe this, Aunt Dahlia, but when I got to the shop, who should be there by the most amazing coincidence but this same Bassett –’

‘It wasn’t a coincidence. He had gone there to have a look at the thing, to see if it was all Tom had said it was. For – can you imagine such lunacy, Bertie? – that chump of an uncle of yours had told the man about it. He might have known that the fiend would hatch some devilish plot for his undoing. And he did. Tom lunched with Sir Watkyn Bassett at the latter’s club yesterday. On the bill of fare was cold lobster, and this Machiavelli sicked him onto it.’

I looked at her incredulously.

‘You aren’t going to tell me,’ I said, astounded, for I was familiar with the intensely delicate and finely poised mechanism of his tummy, ‘that Uncle Tom ate lobster? After what happened last Christmas?’

‘At this man’s instigation, he appears to have eaten not only pounds of lobster, but forests of sliced cucumber as well. According to his story, which he was able to tell me this morning – he could only groan when he came home yesterday – he resisted at first. He was strong and resolute. But the circumstances were too much for him. Bassett’s club, apparently, is one of those clubs where they have the cold dishes on a table in the middle of the room, so placed that wherever you sit you can

help seeing them.'

I nodded.

'They do at the Drones, too. Catsmeat Potter-Pirbright once hit the game pie from the far window six times with six consecutive rolls.'

'That was what caused poor old Tom's downfall. Bassett's lobster sales-talk he might have been strong enough to ignore, but the sight of the thing was too much for him. He yielded, tucked in like a starving Eskimo, and at six o'clock I got a call from the hall porter, asking me if I would send the cart round to fetch away the remains, which had been discovered by the page boy writhing in a corner of the library. He arrived half an hour later, calling weakly for bicarbonate of soda. Bicarbonate of soda on my foot!' said Aunt Dahlia, with a bitter, mirthless laugh. 'He had to have two doctors and a stomach pump.'

'And in the meantime –?' I said, for I could see whither the tale was tending.

'And in the meantime, of course, the fiend Bassett had nipped down and bought the cow-creamer. The man had promised to hold it for Tom till three o'clock, but naturally when three o'clock came and he didn't turn up and there was another customer clamouring for the thing, he let it go. So there you are. Bassett has the cow-creamer, and took it down to Totleigh last night.'

It was a sad story, of course, and one that bore out what I had so often felt about Pop Bassett – a wit, that a magistrate who could nick a fellow for five pounds, when a mere reprimand would more than have met the case, was capable of anything, but I couldn't see what she thought there was to be done about it. The whole situation seemed to me essentially one of those where you just clench the hands and roll the eyes mutely up to heaven and then start a new life and try to forget. I said as much while marmalading a slice of toast.

She gazed at me in silence for a moment.

'Oh? So that's how you feel, is it?'

'I do, yes.'

'You admit, I hope, that by every moral law that cow-creamer belongs to Tom?'

'Oh, emphatically.'

'But you would take this foul outrage lying down? You would allow this stick-up man to get away with the swag? Confronted with the spectacle of as raw a bit of underhanded skulduggery as has ever been perpetrated in a civilized country, you would just sit tight and say "Well, well!" and do nothing?'

I weighed this.

'Possibly not "Well, well!" I concede that the situation is one that calls for the strongest comment. But I wouldn't do anything.'

'Well, I'm going to do something. I'm going to pinch the damn thing.'

I started at her, astounded. I uttered no verbal rebuke, but there was a distinct 'Tut, tut!' in my gaze. Even though the provocation was, I admitted, severe, I could not approve of these strong-arm methods. And I was about to awaken her dormant conscience by asking her gently what the Quorum would think of these goings-on – or, for the matter of that, the Pytchley – when she added:

'Or, rather, you are!'

I had just lighted a cigarette as she spoke these words, and so, according to what they say in the advertisement, ought to have been nonchalant. But it must have been the wrong sort of cigarette, for I was shot out of my chair as if somebody had shoved a bradawl through the seat.

'Who, me?'

'That's right. See how it all fits in. You're going to stay at Totleigh. You will have a hundred excellent opportunities of getting your hooks on the thing –'

‘But, dash it!’

‘—and I must have it, because otherwise I shall never be able to dig a cheque out of Tom for the Pomona Grindle serial. He simply won’t be in the mood. And I signed the old girl up yesterday at a fabulous price, half the sum agreed upon to be paid in advance a week from current date. So snap it, my lad. I can’t see what you’re making all this heavy weather about. It doesn’t seem to me much to do for a loved aunt.’

‘It seems to me a dashed lot to do for a loved aunt, and I’m jolly well not going to dream —’

‘Oh, yes you are, because you know what will happen, if you don’t.’ She paused significantly. ‘You follow me, Watson?’

I was silent. She had no need to tell me what she meant. This was not the first time she had displayed the velvet hand beneath the iron glove — or, rather, the other way about — in this manner.

For this ruthless relative has one all-powerful weapon which she holds constantly over my head like the sword of — of who was the chap? — Jeeves would know — and by means of which she can always bend me to her will — viz. the threat that if I don’t kick in she will bar me from her board and wipe Anatole’s cooking from my lips. I shall not lightly forget the time when she placed sanctions on me for a whole month — right in the middle of the pheasant season, when this superman is at his incomparable best.

I made one last attempt to reason with her.

‘But why does Uncle Tom want his frightful cow-creamer? It’s a ghastly object. He would be far better without it.’

‘He doesn’t think so. Well, there it is. Perform this simple, easy task for me, or guests at my dinner table will soon be saying: “Why is it that we never seem to see Bertie Wooster here any more?” Bless my soul, what an amazing lunch that was that Anatole gave us yesterday! “Superb” is the only word I don’t wonder you’re fond of his cooking. As you sometimes say, it melts in the mouth.’

I eyed her sternly.

‘Aunt Dahlia, this is blackmail!’

‘Yes, isn’t it?’ she said, and beetled off.

I resumed my seat, and ate a moody slice of cold bacon.

Jeeves entered.

‘The bags are packed, sir.’

‘Very good, Jeeves,’ I said. ‘Then let us be starting.’

‘Man and boy, Jeeves,’ I said, breaking a thoughtful silence which had lasted for about eighty-seven miles, ‘I have been in some tough spots in my time, but this one wins the mottled oyster.’

We were bowling along in the two-seater on our way to Totleigh Towers, self at the wheel, Jeeves at my side, the personal effects in the dicky. We had got off round about eleven-thirty, and the genial afternoon was now at its juiciest. It was one of those crisp, sunny, bracing days with a pleasant tang to the air, and had circumstances been different from what they were, I should no doubt have been feeling at the peak of my form, chatting gaily, waving to passing rustics, possibly even singing some light snatch.

Unfortunately, however, if there was one thing circumstances weren’t, it was different from what they were, and there was no suspicion of a song on the lips. The more I thought of what lay before me at these bally Towers, the bowed-downer did the heart become.

‘The mottled oyster,’ I repeated.

‘Sir?’

- [\*\*Guerrillas pdf, azw \(kindle\), epub, doc, mobi\*\*](#)
- [click Emotional Freedom: Liberate Yourself from Negative Emotions and Transform Your Life pdf, azw \(kindle\), epub](#)
- [click The Scapegoat: A Novel](#)
- [download The Throat \(Blue Rose Trilogy, Book 3\)](#)
- [\*download online The Reformed Vampire Support Group\*](#)
  
- <http://www.uverp.it/library/When-Mountains-Walked.pdf>
- <http://aneventshop.com/ebooks/Life-After-Death--The-Evidence.pdf>
- <http://aircon.servicessingaporecompany.com/?lib/The-Scapegoat--A-Novel.pdf>
- <http://www.gateaerospaceforum.com/?library/Why-the-Catholic-Church-Must-Change--A-Necessary-Conversation.pdf>
- <http://omarnajmi.com/library/Android-on-x86--An-Introduction-to-Optimizing-for-Intel---Architecture.pdf>