

ЛЕГКО ЧИТАЕМ
ПО-АНГЛИЙСКИ

4
УРОВЕНЬ



P. G. Wodehouse
THE INIMITABLE JEEVES

Пелам Гренвилл Вудхаус
ЭТОТ НЕПОДРАЖАЕМЫЙ
ДЖИВС!

словарь • комментарии

Легко читаем по-английски

Пелам Гренвилл Вудхаус

**Этот неподражаемый
Дживс! / The Inimitable Jeeves**

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«Этот неподражаемый Дживс!» – это коллекция эпизодов из жизни Бертрама Вустера и его дворецкого Дживса. Друг, постоянно влюбляющийся в новых девушек, тетушка, находящаяся в постоянном поиске невесты для Берти, а также два совершенно неуправляемых племянника – все это вносит раздор в размеренное существование молодого джентльмена. Для удобства читателя текст сопровождается комментариями и кратким словарем. Предназначается для продолжающих изучать английский язык (уровень 4 – Upper-Intermediate).

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Пелам Гренвилл Вудхаус / P.G. Wodehouse

Этот неподражаемый Дживс! / The Inimitable Jeeves

Адаптация текста и словарь С. А. Матвеева

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1

Jeeves Exerts the Old Cerebellum¹

“Morning, Jeeves,” I said.

“Good morning, sir,” said Jeeves.

He put the good old cup of tea softly on the table by my bed, and I took a refreshing sip. Excellent, as usual. Not too hot, not too sweet, not too weak, not too strong, not too much milk, and not a drop spilled in the saucer. A wonderful guy, Jeeves. So competent in every respect. I’ve said it before, and I’ll say it again. Just for example. Every other valet I’ve ever had entered my room in the morning while I was still asleep, but Jeeves seems to know when I’m awake by a sort of telepathy. He always comes in with the cup exactly two minutes after I come to life.

“How is the weather, Jeeves?”

“Exceptionally clement, sir.”

“Anything in the papers?”

“Some crisis in **the Balkans**², sir. Otherwise, nothing.”

“I say, Jeeves, a man I met at the club last night told me to put all my money on **Privateer**³ for the two o’clock race this afternoon. How about it?”

“I shall not advise it, sir.”

That was enough for me. Jeeves knows. How, I couldn’t say, but he knows. There was a time when I would laugh lightly, and go ahead, and lose everything, but not now.

“By the way,” I said, “have those mauve shirts I ordered arrived yet?”

“Yes, sir. I sent them back.”

“Sent them back?”

“Yes, sir. They would not suit you.”

Well, I must say I bow to superior knowledge. Weak? I don’t know. Most fellows, no doubt, are sure that their valets must only crease trousers and so on; but it’s different with Jeeves. Right from the first day he came to me, I have looked on him as a sort of guide, philosopher, and friend.

“**Mr. Little**⁴ rang up on the telephone a few moments ago, sir. I informed him that you were not yet awake.”

“Did he leave a message?”

“No, sir. He mentioned that he had a matter of importance to discuss with you, but gave no details.”

“Oh, well, I expect I shall see him at the club.”

“No doubt, sir.”

To be honest, I wasn’t excited to see him. **Bingo**⁵ Little is a fellow I was at school with, and we see each other often. He’s the nephew of old **Mortimer**⁶ Little, who retired from business recently with a lot of money. Bingo wandered about London, his uncle gave him enough money, and led a fairly unclouded life. I suspected that he had discovered some new brand of cigarette which he wanted me to try, or something like that.

After breakfast I lit a cigarette and went to the open window. It certainly was one a bright day. “Jeeves,” I said.

¹ **Jeeves Exerts the Old Cerebellum** – Дживз шевелит мозгами

² **the Balkans** – Балканы

³ **Privateer** – Флибустьер (кличка лошади)

⁴ **Little** – Литл

⁵ **Bingo** – Бинго

⁶ **Mortimer** – Мортимер

“Sir?” said Jeeves.

“You were absolutely right about the weather. It is a nice morning.”

“Decidedly, sir.”

“Spring and all that.”

“Yes, sir.”

“In the spring, Jeeves, flowers grow and birds sing.”

“No doubt, sir.”

“Exactly! Then bring me my cane, my yellowest shoes, and the old green hat. I’m going into the park.”

I don’t know if you know that sort of feeling you get on these days in the end of April and in the beginning of May, when the sky is blue, with cotton-wool clouds, and there’s a breeze blowing from the west? Romantic, if you know what I mean. On this particular morning it seemed to me that what I really wanted was some charming girl to ask me to save her from assassins or something. So that it was rather terrible when I suddenly **ran into**⁷ Bingo Little, in a crimson satin tie decorated with horseshoes.

“Hallo, **Bertie**⁸,” said Bingo.

“My God, man!” I gargled. “Your tie! Why? For what reason?”

“Oh, the tie?” He blushed. “I—er—I was given it.”

He seemed embarrassed, so I **dropped the subject**⁹. We walked a bit, and sat down on a couple of chairs **by the Serpentine**¹⁰.

“Jeeves tells me you want to talk to me about something,” I said.

“Eh?” said Bingo. “Oh yes, yes. Yes.”

I waited for the news, but he didn’t seem to go on. Conversation languished. He stared straight ahead of him.

“I say, Bertie,” he said, after a pause of about an hour and a quarter.

“Hallo!”

“Do you like the name **Mabel**¹¹?”

“No.”

“No?”

“No.”

“You don’t think there’s a kind of music in the word, like the wind through the trees?”

“No.”

He seemed disappointed for a moment; then cheered up.

“Of course, you wouldn’t. You always were a worm without any soul, weren’t you?”

“Just as you say. Who is she? Tell me all.”

For I realized now that poor old Bingo had fallen in love again. Ever since I have known him—and we were at school together—he has been perpetually falling in love with someone, generally in the spring. At school he had the finest collection of actresses’ photographs of his time; and at Oxford he was famous for his romantic nature.

“You’d better come along and meet her at lunch,” he said, looking at his watch.

“Well,” I said. “Where are you meeting her? At **the Ritz**¹²?”

“Near the Ritz.”

⁷ **ran into** – столкнулся с

⁸ **Bertie** – Берти

⁹ **I dropped the subject** – я оставил эту тему

¹⁰ **by the Serpentine** – у Серпентина

¹¹ **Mabel** – Мэйбл

¹² **the Ritz** – «Ритц» (название отеля)

He was geographically accurate. About fifty yards east of the Ritz there is a **tea-and-bun shop**¹³, and into this young Bingo dived like a rabbit. Before I had time to say a word we were at a table, with a pool of coffee left there by a previous client.

I couldn't quite understand the situation. Bingo was not a millionaire, but he has always had a fair amount. Why, then, has he invited the girl at this eatery?

The waitress arrived. A rather pretty girl.

"Aren't we going to wait?" I started to say to Bingo, but I caught sight of his face, and stopped.

"Mabel," said Bingo, "this is Bertie Wooster, a friend of mine."

"Pleased to meet you," she said. "Nice morning."

"Pleased to meet you, too," I said.

"You see I'm wearing the tie," said Bingo.

"It suits you beautiful," said the girl.

Personally, if anyone had told me that a tie like that suited me, I should have risen and fought them, regardless of their age and sex; but poor old Bingo simply got all **flustered with gratification**¹⁴, and smirked.

"Well, what's it going to be today?" asked the girl. Bingo studied the menu.

"I'll have a cup of cocoa, cold veal and ham pie, slice of fruit cake, and a macaroon. Same for you, Bertie?"

I gazed at him, revolted. He thinks I am going to insult my stomach with that! And he has been a friend of mine all these years.

"Or how about a bit of hot **steak-pudding**¹⁵, with some wine?" said Bingo.

You know, love can change a man completely. This fellow before me, who spoke carelessly of macaroons and cocoa, was the man who had ordered *sole frite au gourmet aux champignons* and the best wine some day. Ghastly! Ghastly!

A roll and butter and a small coffee seemed the only things on the list that were eatable, so I chose them, and Mabel went away.

"Well?" said Bingo rapturously.

He wanted my opinion of the **female poisoner**¹⁶ who had just left us.

"Very nice," I said.

He seemed dissatisfied.

"You don't think she's the most wonderful girl you ever saw?" he said.

"Oh, absolutely!" I said. "Where did you meet her?"

"At a **subscription dance**¹⁷ at **Camberwell**¹⁸."

"What were you doing at a subscription dance at Camberwell?"

"Your Jeeves asked me to buy a couple of tickets. It was in aid of some charity or other."

"Jeeves? I didn't know about that business of his."

"Well, I suppose he has to relax a bit every sometimes. Anyway, he was there, too. And danced. I didn't want to dance at first, but changed my mind. Oh, Bertie, think **what I might have missed**¹⁹!"

"What might have you missed?" I asked.

"Mabel, you fool. If I hadn't gone I shouldn't have met Mabel."

"Oh, ah!"

"Bertie," said Bingo, "I want your advice."

¹³ **tea-and-bun shop** – закусочная, кафе

¹⁴ **got all flustered with gratification** – расплылся от удовольствия

¹⁵ **steak-pudding** – мясной пуддинг

¹⁶ **female poisoner** – отравительница

¹⁷ **subscription dance** – благотворительные танцы

¹⁸ **Camberwell** – Камберуэлл (район в южной части Лондона)

¹⁹ **what I might have missed** – чего бы я мог лишиться

“Go on.”

“At least, not your advice, because that wouldn’t be good to anybody. Not that I want to hurt your feelings, of course.”

“No, no, I see that.”

“What I wish you would do is to tell the whole story to that fellow Jeeves, and see what he suggests. You’ve often told me that he has helped other friends of yours. From what you tell me, he’s the brains of the family. Tell him about my problem.”

“What problem?”

“Why, you idiot, my uncle, of course. What do you think my uncle’s going to say to all this? If I tell him about the marriage, he’d die at once.”

“One of these emotional guys, eh?”

“He needs to be prepared to receive the news. But how?”

“Ah!”

“You see, I’m dependent on my uncle. So tell Jeeves the case. Tell him my future is in his hands, and that, if the wedding bells ring out, he can rely on me, even unto half my kingdom. Well, ten pounds. So, will he help me for ten pounds?”

“Undoubtedly,” I said.

I wasn’t surprised that Bingo wanted to tell Jeeves his private affairs like this. It was the first thing I would do myself. As I have observed, Jeeves is full of bright ideas. If anybody could fix things for poor old Bingo, he could.

I **stated the case to him**²⁰ that night after dinner.

“Jeeves.”

“Sir?”

“Are you busy just now?”

“No, sir.”

“I mean, not doing anything in particular?”

“No, sir. Usually at this hour I read useful books; but, if you desire my services, this can easily be postponed.”

“Well, I want your advice. It’s about Mr Little.”

“Young Mr Little, sir, or the elder Mr Little, his uncle, who lives in **Pounceby Gardens**²¹?”

Jeeves seemed to know everything. Amazing. I’d known Bingo practically all my life, and yet I didn’t know where his uncle lived.

“How did you know he lived in Pounceby Gardens?” I said.

“I know the elder Mr Little’s cook, sir.”

“Do you mean you’re engaged?”

“It may be said, sir.”

“Well, well!”

“She is a remarkably excellent cook, sir,” said Jeeves, as though he had to give some explanation. “What was it you wished to ask me about Mr Little?”

I gave him the details.

“And that’s it, Jeeves,” I said. “I think we must help poor old Bingo. Tell me about old Mr Little. What sort of a man is he?”

“A somewhat curious character, sir. He retired from business and became a great recluse, and now devotes himself almost entirely to the pleasures of the table.”

“Greedy, you mean?”

²⁰ **stated the case to him** – изложил ему дело

²¹ **Pounceby Gardens** – Паунсби Гарденз

"I would not, perhaps, take the liberty of describing him in precisely those terms, sir. He is what is usually called a gourmet. Very particular about what he eats, and for that reason values Miss Watson's services."

"The cook?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, it seems to me that our best plan would be to tell him everything after dinner one night. He will be in a good mood, and all that."

"The difficulty is, sir, that at the moment Mr Little is on a diet, because of an attack of gout."

"Things begin to look badly."

"No, sir, I think that the elder Mr Little's misfortune may be turned to the younger Mr Little's advantage. Yesterday I was speaking to Mr Little's valet, and he was telling me that it has become his duty to read to Mr Little in the evenings. If I were in your place, sir, I should send young Mr Little to read to his uncle."

"Nephew's devotion, you mean? The old man will be touched, right?"

"**Partly that**²², sir. But I would rely more on young Mr Little's choice of literature."

"That's no good. Bingo is a good fellow, but when it comes to literature he stops at **the *Sporting Times***²³."

"That difficulty may be overcome. I would be happy to select books for Mr Little to read. Perhaps I might explain my idea a little further."

"I can't say I quite understand."

"The method which I advocate is what, I believe, they call **Direct Suggestion**²⁴, sir. You may have had experience of the system?"

"You mean they keep on telling you that some soap or other is the best, and after a while you come under the influence and buy twenty pieces?"

"Exactly, sir. The same method was the basis of all the most valuable propaganda during the recent war. I see no reason why it should not be adopted by us to get the desired result with regard to the subject's views on **class distinctions**²⁵. If young Mr Little reads day after day to his uncle a series of stories in which marriage with young persons of an inferior social status was appropriate and admirable, I think it will prepare the elder Mr Little's mind for the reception of the information that his nephew wishes to marry a waitress in a tea-shop."

"Are there any books of that sort nowadays? The only ones I ever see mentioned in the papers are about married couples who hate each other."

"Yes, sir, there are some. You have never read *All for Love*, by **Rosie M. Banks**²⁶?"

"No."

"Nor, *A Red, Red Summer*, by the same author?"

"No."

"I have an aunt, sir, who owns an almost complete set of Rosie M. Banks. I could easily borrow as many volumes as young Mr Little might require."

"Well, it's worth trying."

"I should certainly recommend the scheme, sir."

"All right, then. Go to your aunt tomorrow and grab a couple of the best stories. We shall try."

"Precisely, sir."

²² **partly that** – отчасти

²³ ***Sporting Times*** – «Спортивные ведомости»

²⁴ **Direct Suggestion** – непосредственное внушение

²⁵ **class distinctions** – классовое неравенство

²⁶ **Rosie M. Banks** – Розы М.Бэнкс

2

No Wedding Bells for Bingo

Bingo reported three days later that Rosie M. Banks worked well. At the beginning, Old Little was not happy with the change of literary diet; but Bingo had read him Chapter One of *All for Love* and after everything went well. They had finished *A Red, Red Summer Rose*, *Madcap Myrtle*²⁷ and *Only a Factory Girl*, and were reading *The Courtship of Lord Strathmorlick*²⁸.

Bingo told me all this in a husky voice. The only thing to complain was his throat which was beginning to show signs of cracking under the strain. He was looking his symptoms in a medical dictionary, and he thought he had got “**clergyman’s throat**”²⁹. But I was not sorry for him, because his aim was near, and also after the evening’s reading he always stayed on to dinner; and the dinners, as he told me, by old Little’s cook were excellent. There were tears in his eyes when he was talking about **the clear soup**³⁰.

Old Little wasn’t able to take part in these banquets, but Bingo said that he came to the table and had his **arrowroot**³¹, and sniffed the dishes, and told stories of *entrées*³² he had had in the past. Anyhow, things seemed to be quite wonderful, and Bingo said he had got an idea. He wouldn’t tell me what it was.

“We make progress, Jeeves,” I said.

“That is very satisfactory, sir.”

“Mr Little tells me that when he came to **the big scene**³³ in *Only a Factory Girl*, his uncle was crying like a baby.”

“Indeed, sir?”

“Where **Lord Claude**³⁴ takes the girl in his arms, you know, and says—”

“I am familiar with the passage, sir. It is distinctly moving. It is my aunt’s favourite scene.”

“I think we’re on the right track.”

“It seems so, sir.”

“In fact, this looks like another success of yours. I’ve always said, and I always shall say, that you are a sage, Jeeves. All the other great thinkers of the age are nothing.”

“Thank you very much, sir. You can always rely on me.”

About a week after this, Bingo told the news that his uncle’s gout had ceased to trouble him, and that he would be back at the table with a knife and a fork as before.

“And, by the way,” said Bingo, “he wants you to lunch with him tomorrow.”

“Me? Why me? He doesn’t know I exist.”

“Oh, yes, he does. I’ve told him about you.”

“What have you told him?”

“Oh, various things. Anyhow, he wants to meet you. And take my tip, you’ll go! I think the lunch tomorrow will be something special.”

I don’t know why it was, but Bingo’s words sounded strange.

²⁷ *Madcap Myrtle* – «Сумасбродка Миртл»

²⁸ *Strathmorlick* – Стартморлик

²⁹ *clergyman’s throat* – воспаление голосовых связок

³⁰ *clear soup* – бульон

³¹ *arrowroot* – аррорут (крахмал, изготовленный из маранты, тропического растения из Южной Америки)

³² *entrées* – первые блюда (франц.)

³³ *big scene* – главный эпизод

³⁴ *Claude* – Клод

“There is something strange in it,” I said. “Why should your uncle ask a fellow to lunch whom he’s never seen?”

“My dear old fathead, haven’t I just said that I’ve been telling him all about you—that you’re my best friend—at school together, and all that sort of thing?”

“So what? Why do want me to come?”

Bingo hesitated for a moment.

“Well, I told you I’d got an idea. This is it. I want you to tell him the news. I’m not brave enough.”

“What!”

“And you call yourself a friend of mine!”

“Yes, I know; but there are limits.”

“Bertie,” said Bingo, “I saved your life once.”

“When?”

“Didn’t I? It must have been some other fellow, then. Well, anyway, we were studying at school together and all that. **You can’t let me down**³⁵.”

“Oh, all right,” I said. “But, when you say you are not brave enough, you misjudge yourself. A fellow who—”

“**Cheerio!**³⁶” said young Bingo. “One-thirty tomorrow. Don’t be late.”

I can say that the more I thought about the lunch the less I liked the idea. It was all very well for Bingo to say that I was invited; but what if they would drive me out? However, at one-thirty next day I was at No. 16, Pounceby Gardens, and punched the bell. And half a minute later I was in the drawingroom, shaking hands with the fattest man I have ever seen in my life.

The motto of the Little family was evidently “variety”. Young Bingo is long and thin; but the uncle was like a square.

“Mr Wooster, I am gratified—I am proud—I am honoured.”

“Oh, ah!” I said.

He stepped back a bit.

“You are very young and did so much!”

I couldn’t follow his thought. My family, especially my **Aunt Agatha**³⁷, have always told me that my existence is a wasted life, and that, since I won the prize at my school for the best collection of wild flowers made during the summer holidays, I haven’t done anything useful at all. I was wondering if he mixed me up with someone else, when the telephone bell rang outside in the hall, and the maid came in to say that I was wanted. I came down, and found it was young Bingo.

“Hallo!” said young Bingo. “So you’ve got there? Good man! I knew I could rely on you. Was my uncle pleased to see you?”

“Absolutely. I can’t understand why.”

“Oh, that’s all right. I just rang up to explain. The fact is, old man, I told him that you were the author of those books I’ve been reading to him.”

“What!”

“Yes, I said that “Rosie M. Banks” was your **pen-name**³⁸, and you didn’t want it generally known, because you were a modest man. He’ll listen to you now. A bright idea, right? Well, go on, old lad, and remember that I can’t possibly marry on what I’ve got now. So try to persuade him to give me more money. At least double. Well, that’s that. **Cheerio!**”

And he rang off. At that moment the gong sounded, and my host came downstairs.

³⁵ **let me down** – бросить меня

³⁶ **Cheerio!** – Пока-пока!

³⁷ **Aunt Agatha** – тётя Агата

³⁸ **pen-name** – псевдоним

I always look back to that lunch with a sort of regret. It was the best lunch in my life, and I could not appreciate it. Subconsciously, if you know what I mean, I could see it was pretty special, but I was shocked with the ghastly situation in which young Bingo had landed me.

Old Little began:

“My nephew has probably told you that I have been studying your books?”

“Yes. He mentioned it. How—er—how did you like them?”

He gazed reverently at me.

“Mr Wooster, I am not ashamed to say that the tears came into my eyes as I listened to them. It amazes me that a man as young as you can be able to learn human nature so deeply; to write novels so true, so human, so moving, so vital!”

“Oh, it’s nothing special,” I said.

It was terribly hot in the room.

“Do you find the room a little warm?” he asked.

“Oh, no, no, rather not. Just right.”

“Then it’s the pepper. If my cook has a fault—which I am not prepared to admit—it is that she adores pepper. By the way, do you like her cooking?”

I was so relieved that we had changed the subject that I shouted approval.

“I am delighted to hear it, Mr Wooster. I may be prejudiced, but to my mind that woman is a genius.”

“Absolutely!” I said.

“She has been with me seven years, and in all that time I have not known her guilty of a single lapse from the highest standard. Except once, in the winter of 1917, a certain mayonnaise of hers was not soft enough. But there had been several **air-raids**³⁹ about that time, and no doubt the poor woman was shaken. But nothing is perfect in this world, Mr Wooster. For seven years I have lived in constant apprehension lest some person might lure her. To my certain knowledge she has received offers, lucrative offers, to accept service elsewhere. You can imagine, Mr Wooster, my sorrow when she said that she was going to change her place of employment!”

“Good Lord!”

“Oh, my dear author of *A Red, Red Summer Rose!* But I am glad to say the worst has not happened. **Jane**⁴⁰ is not leaving me.”

“Wonderful!”

“Wonderful, indeed. And, speaking of your books, may I say that what has impressed me about them even more than the actual narrative, is your philosophy of life. If there were more men like you, Mr Wooster, London would be a better place.”

This was opposite to my Aunt Agatha’s philosophy of life, she has always told me that it is the presence of guys like me that makes London a plague spot.

“Let me tell you, Mr Wooster, that I appreciate your splendid defiance of the fetishes of a social system. I appreciate it! I remember the words of Lord Bletchmore in *Only a Factory Girl*, “Be her origin never so humble, a good woman is the equal of the finest lady on earth!” ”

“Really! Do you think that?”

“I do, Mr Wooster. I am ashamed to say that there was a time when I was like other men, a slave to the idiotic convention which we call Class Distinction. But, since I read your book—”

“You think it’s all right for a guy to marry a girl of what you might describe as the lower classes?”

“Of course I do, Mr Wooster.”

I took a deep breath, and told him the good news.

³⁹ **air-raids** – воздушные налёты

⁴⁰ **Jane** – Джейн

“Young Bingo—your nephew, you know—wants to marry a waitress,” I said.

“I honour him for it,” said Old Little.

“You don’t object?”

“On the contrary.”

I took another deep breath.

“I hope you won’t think I’m **butting in**⁴¹,” I said, “but—er—well, how about it?”

“I fear I do not quite follow you.”

“Well, I mean to say ... The money you’re good enough to give him. He was rather hoping that you—because of his marriage—might add some money to his income.”

Old Little shook his head regretfully.

“I fear that can hardly be managed. You see, a man in my position must save every penny. I will gladly continue my nephew’s existing allowance, but beyond that I cannot go. It would not be fair to my wife.”

“What! But you’re not married?”

“Not yet. But I think about it. The lady who for years has cooked so well for me honoured me by accepting my hand this very morning.” A cold gleam of triumph came into his eye. “Now let them try to get her away from me!” he muttered.

“Young Mr Little has been calling you during the afternoon, sir,” said Jeeves that night, when I got home.

“No wonder,” I said. I had sent poor old Bingo a note by messenger-boy shortly after lunch.

“He seemed a little agitated.”

“I don’t wonder, Jeeves,” I said, “I’m afraid I’ve bad news for you. That scheme of yours—reading those books to old Mr Little and all that—has led to nowhere.”

“They did not soften him?”

“They did. That’s the whole trouble. Jeeves, I’m sorry to say *that fiancée*⁴² of yours—Miss Watson, you know—the cook, you know—well, she’s chosen riches, if you know what I mean.”

“Sir?”

“She’s got engaged to old Mr Little!”

“Indeed, sir?”

“You don’t seem much upset.”

“The fact is, sir, I had anticipated some such outcome.”

I stared at him. “Then why did you suggest me that scheme?”

“To tell you the truth, sir, I was not wholly happy with my relations with Miss Watson. I respect her exceedingly, but I have seen for a long time that we were not suited. Now, the other young person with whom I have an understanding—”

“Oh Lord, Jeeves! There isn’t another?”

“Yes, sir.”

“How long has this been going on?”

“For some weeks, sir. I was greatly attracted by her when I first met her at a subscription dance at Camberwell.”

“Oh Jesus! Not—”

Jeeves inclined his head gravely.

“Yes, sir. By an odd coincidence it is the same young person in whom young Mr Little has been so interested. Good night, sir.”

⁴¹ to butt in — лезть не в свое дело

⁴² fiancée — невеста

3

Aunt Agatha Speaks her Mind⁴³

To be honest, I can't say I was sorry for Bingo. Less than a week after he had had the bad news I saw him dancing with some girl at **Giro's**⁴⁴.

Bingo is unsinkable. He never went down. When his little love-affairs are actually on, nobody could be more earnest; but once the girl has handed him his hat and begged him never to let her see him again, he is as merry as ever. I've seen it happen a dozen times.

So I didn't worry about Bingo. Or about anything else, as a matter of fact. Life was wonderful. Everything seemed to be going right. Even three horses on which I'd invested a sizeable amount won instead of sitting down to rest in the middle of the race, as horses usually do when I've got money on them.

Added to this, the weather was excellent; Jeeves liked my new socks; and my Aunt Agatha had gone to France for at least six weeks. And, if you knew my Aunt Agatha, you'd agree that that alone was happiness enough for anyone.

One morning while I was having my bath, I began to sing like a bally nightingale. It seemed to me that everything was absolutely for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

But have you ever noticed a strange thing about life? When I dried myself and came into the sittingroom, I saw a letter from Aunt Agatha on the mantelpiece.

"Oh God!" I said when I'd read it.

"Sir?" said Jeeves.

"It's from my Aunt Agatha, Jeeves. **Mrs Gregson**⁴⁵, you know."

"Yes, sir?"

"Ah, you wouldn't speak in that careless tone if you knew what was in it," I said with a hollow laugh. "The curse has come upon us, Jeeves. She wants me to go and join her at—what's the name of the dashed place?—at **Roville-sur-mer**⁴⁶. Oh, damn it!"

"Packing, sir?"

"I suppose so."

To people who don't know my Aunt Agatha I find it extraordinarily difficult to explain why it I am afraid of her. I mean, I'm not dependent on her financially or anything like that. It's simply personality. You see, all through my childhood and when I was a kid at school she was always able **to turn me inside out**⁴⁷ with a single glance. If she said I had go to Roville, it was all decided. I must buy the tickets.

"What's the idea, Jeeves? I wonder why she wants me."

"I could not say, sir."

Well, it was no good talking about it. I must go to Roville. At last I will be able to wear my cummerbund I had bought six months ago. One of those silk contrivances, you know, which you tie round your waist instead of a waistcoat. To be honest, I did not wear it because I knew that there would be trouble with Jeeves. Still, at a place like Roville—with the gaiety and *joie de vivre*⁴⁸ of France—it will be all right.

⁴³ **speaks her mind** – высказывается

⁴⁴ **at Giro's** – в «Джиро»

⁴⁵ **Gregson** – Грегсон

⁴⁶ **Roville-sur-mer** – Ровиль-сюр-Мер

⁴⁷ **to turn me inside out** – вывернуть меня наизнанку

⁴⁸ **joie de vivre** – радость жизни (франц.)

Roville, which I reached early in the morning is a nice **health resort**⁴⁹ where a fellow without his aunts might spend a wonderful week. It is like all these French places, mainly sands and hotels and casinos. The hotel which had had the bad luck to draw Aunt Agatha was **the Splendide**⁵⁰. I've had experience of Aunt Agatha at hotels before. She knows how to deal with them. Of course, the real rough work was all over when I arrived, but I understood that she had started by having her first room changed because it hadn't a southern exposure and her next because it had a creaking wardrobe and that she had said what she had thought about the cooking, the waiting, the chambermaiding and everything else. She was satisfied with this triumph, and she was almost motherly when we met.

"I am so glad you were able to come, Bertie," she said. "The air will do you so much good. It's better for you than to spend your time in stuffy London night clubs."

"Oh, ah," I said.

"You will meet some pleasant people, too. I want to introduce you to a miss **Hemmingway**⁵¹ and her brother, who have become great friends of mine. I am sure you will like Miss Hemmingway. A nice, quiet girl, so different from so many of the **bold girls**⁵² one meets in London nowadays. Her brother is curate at **Chipley-in-the-Glen in Dorsetshire**⁵³. A very good family. She is a charming girl."

All these words were so unlike Aunt Agatha. I felt a suspicion. And I was right.

"**Aline**⁵⁴ Hemmingway," said Aunt Agatha, "is just the girl I should like to see you marry, Bertie. You ought to be thinking of getting married. Marriage might make something of you. And I could not wish you a better wife than dear Aline. She would be such a good influence in your life."

"But, I say—" I began.

"Bertie!" said Aunt Agatha, dropping the motherly manner for a bit and giving me the cold eye.

"Yes, but I say—"

"It is young men like you, Bertie, who spoil the society. Cursed with too much money, you lead an idle selfishness life which might have been made useful, helpful and profitable. You do nothing but waste your time on frivolous pleasures. You are simply an anti-social animal, a drone. Bertie, it is imperative that you marry."

"But—"

"Yes! You should have children to—"

"No, really, I say, please!" I said, blushing richly. Aunt Agatha belongs to two or three of these women's clubs, and she often forgets she isn't in **the smoking-room**⁵⁵.

"Bertie," she resumed. "Ah, here they are!" she said. "Aline, dear!"

And I perceived a girl and a fellow. They were smiling in a pleased sort of manner.

"I want you to meet my nephew, Bertie Wooster," said Aunt Agatha. "He has just arrived. Such a surprise! I did not expect to meet him in Roville."

I was feeling like a cat in the middle of a lot of hounds. An inner voice was whispering that **Bertram**⁵⁶ was in trouble.

The brother was a small round man with a face rather like a sheep. He wore **pince-nez**⁵⁷, his expression was benevolent, and he had on one of those collars which button at the back.

"Welcome to Roville, Mr Wooster," he said.

⁴⁹ **health resort** – курорт

⁵⁰ **Splendide** – «Сплендид» (название отеля)

⁵¹ **Hemmingway** – Хемингуэй

⁵² **bold girls** – наглые девицы

⁵³ **Chipley-in-the-Glen in Dorsetshire** – Чапли-ин-зэ-Глен в Дорсетшире

⁵⁴ **Aline** – Алина

⁵⁵ **smoking-room** – курительная комната

⁵⁶ **Bertram** – Бертрам

⁵⁷ **pince-nez** – пенсне

“Oh, **Sidney**⁵⁸!” said the girl. “Doesn’t Mr Wooster remind you of **Canon Blenkinsop**⁵⁹, who came to Chipley to preach last Easter?”

“My dear! The resemblance is most striking!”

They peered at me for a while as if I were something in a glass case, and I had a look at the girl. There’s no doubt about it, she was different from what Aunt Agatha had called the bold girls one meets in London nowadays. No **bobbed hair**⁶⁰, no cigarette. I don’t know when I’ve met anybody who looked so respectable. She had on a kind of plain dress, and her hair was plain, and her face was sort of saintlike. I don’t pretend to be a **Sherlock Holmes**⁶¹ or anything of that order, but the moment I looked at her I said to myself, “The girl plays the organ in a village church!”

Well, we gazed at one another for a bit, and there was a certain amount of **chit-chat**⁶², and then I went away. But before I went I had been told to take brother and girl for a drive that afternoon. And the thought of it depressed me to such an extent that I felt there was only one thing to be done. I went straight back to my room, took out the cummerbund, and draped it round myself. I turned round and saw Jeeves.

“I beg your pardon, sir,” he said. “You are surely not proposing to appear in public in that thing?”

“The cummerbund?” I said in a careless way. “Oh, yes!”

“I should not advise it, sir, really I shouldn’t.”

“Why not?”

“The effect, sir, is unpredictable.”

I looked at him. I mean to say, nobody knows better than I do that Jeeves is a master mind and all that, but, damn it, a fellow must call his soul his own. You can’t be a slave to your valet. Besides, I was feeling pretty low and the cummerbund was the only thing which could cheer me up.

“You know, the trouble with you, Jeeves,” I said, “is that you’re too—what’s the word I want?—too isolated. You can’t realize that you aren’t in **Piccadilly**⁶³ all the time. In a place like this something colourful and poetic is expected of you. Why, I’ve just seen a fellow downstairs in a suit of yellow velvet.”

“Nevertheless, sir—”

“Jeeves,” I said firmly, “my mind is made up. I am feeling a little **low-spirited**⁶⁴ and need cheering. Besides, what’s wrong with it? This cummerbund seems to me to be quite right. I consider that it has rather a Spanish effect. The old *hidalgo* and the bull fight.”

“**Very good, sir**⁶⁵,” said Jeeves coldly.

If there’s one thing that upsets me, it’s unpleasantness in the home. Aunt Agatha, the Hemmingway girl ... I felt though nobody loved me.

The drive that afternoon was boring as I had expected. The curate fellow prattled on of this and that; the girl admired the view; and I got a headache. I went back to my room to dress for dinner, feeling like a toad under the harrow. I tried to talk to Jeeves.

“I say, Jeeves,” I said.

“Sir?”

“Mix me some brandy and soda.”

“Yes, sir.”

⁵⁸ **Sidney** – Сидни

⁵⁹ **Canon Blenkinsop** – Кэнон Блэнкинсон

⁶⁰ **bobbed hair** – накладные волосы

⁶¹ **Sherlock Holmes** – Шерлок Холмс

⁶² **chit-chat** – болтовня

⁶³ **Piccadilly** – Пикадилли

⁶⁴ **low-spirited** – в плохом настроении

⁶⁵ **Very good, sir.** – Слушаюсь, сэр.

“Jeeves, not too much soda.”

“Very good, sir.”

After it, I felt better.

“Jeeves,” I said.

“Sir?”

“I think I’m in a big trouble, Jeeves.”

“Indeed, sir?”

I looked at him. He still remembers the cummerbund.

“Yes,” I said, suppressing the pride of the Woosters. “Have you seen a girl here with a parson brother?”

“Miss Hemmingway, sir? Yes, sir.”

“Aunt Agatha wants me to marry her.”

“Indeed, sir?”

“Well, what about it?”

“Sir?”

“I mean, have you anything to suggest?”

“No, sir.”

His manner was very cold.

“Oh, well, tra-la-la!” I said.

“Precisely sir,” said Jeeves.

And that was all.

4

Pearls Mean Tears

I remember—it must have been when I was at school—reading a poem or something about something or other in which there was a line which went, “Shades of the prison house begin to close upon the growing boy.” During the next two weeks that’s exactly how it was with me. I mean to say, I could hear the wedding bells chiming faintly in the distance and getting louder and louder every day, and I could not imagine how to slide out of it. Jeeves, no doubt, was offended, and I couldn’t ask him directly. He could see easily enough that the young master was in a bad way and, if that wasn’t enough, well, it meant that the old feudal spirit was dead in his bosom and there was nothing to be done about it.

It was really funny how the Hemmingway family **had taken to me**⁶⁶. I wouldn’t have said that there was anything particularly fascinating about me—in fact, most people look on me as rather an ass; but this girl and her brother didn’t seem happy if they were away from me. In fact, I’d got into the habit now of retiring to my room when I wanted to rest a little. I got a rather decent suite on the third floor, looking down on to the promenade.

I had gone in my suite one evening and for the first time that day was feeling that life wasn’t so bad after all. Right through the day from lunch-time I’d had the Hemmingway girl nearby. The result was, as I looked down on the lighted promenade and saw all the people walking happily to dinner and the Casino, a kind of wistful feeling came over me. I thought how happy I could have been in this place if only Aunt Agatha and her friends had been elsewhere.

I heaved a sigh, and at that moment there was a knock at the door.

“Someone at the door, Jeeves,” I said.

“Yes, sir.”

He opened the door, and in came Aline Hemmingway and her brother. The last persons I had expected. I really had thought that I could be alone for a minute in my own room.

“Oh, hallo!” I said.

“Oh, Mr Wooster!” said the girl. “I don’t know how to begin.”

Then I noticed that she appeared shocked, and as for the brother, he looked like a sheep with a secret sorrow.

This made me sit up and take notice. I supposed that they had arrived to chat a little, but apparently something serious had happened.

“What’s the matter?” I asked.

“Poor Sidney—it was my fault—I ought never to have let him go there alone,” said the girl, she was agitated.

At this point her brother **gave a little cough**⁶⁷, like a sheep caught in the mist on a mountain top.

“The fact is, Mr Wooster,” he said, “a sad, a most deplorable thing has occurred. This afternoon, while you were so kindly escorting my sister, I found the time ... I was tempted to—ah—gamble at the Casino.”

I looked at the man with respect. If only I’d known earlier that he went in for that sort of thing, I felt that we might have had a better time together.

“Oh!” I said. “Did you win?”

He sighed heavily.

⁶⁶ **had taken to me** – вцепилась в меня

⁶⁷ **gave a little cough** – слегка кашлянул

“If you mean was I successful, I must answer in the negative. I thought that the colour red, having appeared no fewer than seven times in succession, must inevitably give place the colour black. I was in error. I lost everything, Mr Wooster.”

“Bad luck,” I said.

“I left the Casino,” proceeded the fellow, “and returned to the hotel. There I encountered one of my parishioners, **Colonel Musgrave**⁶⁸. I—er—asked him to cash me a cheque for one hundred pounds on my little account in my London bank.”

“Well, that was all to the good, eh?” I said. “I mean, you were lucky to find someone who gave you some money.”

“On the contrary, Mr Wooster, it made matters worse. I burn with shame, but I immediately went back to the Casino and lost the entire sum—this time under the mistaken supposition that the colour black would appear.”

“I say!” I said. “You are having a good time!”

“And,” concluded the fellow, “the most lamentable part of the whole affair is that I have no funds in the bank **to meet the cheque when presented**⁶⁹.”

Though I realized by this time that all this was leading up to draw money from me, my heart warmed to the poor guy. Indeed, I gazed at him with interest and admiration. Never before had I encountered such a curate. He certainly appeared to be a real daredevil; and I wished he had shown me this side of his character before.

“That Colonel Musgrave,” he went on, “is not a man who would be likely to overlook the matter. He is a hard man. He will expose me to the priest. The priest is a hard man, too. In short, Mr Wooster, if Colonel Musgrave presents that cheque, I shall be ruined. And he leaves for England tonight.”

The girl, who had been standing by biting her handkerchief, now wept.

“Mr Wooster,” she cried, “won’t you, won’t you help us? Oh, do say you will! We must have the money to get back the cheque from Colonel Musgrave before nine o’clock—he leaves on the nine-twenty. I remembered how kind you had always been. Mr Wooster, will you lend Sidney the money and take these as security?”

And before I knew what she was doing she had dived into her bag, taken a case, and opened it.

“My pearls,” she said. “I don’t know what they are worth—they were a present from my poor father—”

“Now, alas, no more—” said her the brother.

“But I know they must be worth ever so much more than the amount we want.”

It was embarrassing. It made me feel like a pawnbroker.

“No, I say, really,” I protested. “There’s no need of any security, you know. Only too glad to let you have the money. I’ve got it on me, as a matter of fact. Rather luckily drew some this morning.”

And I took the money out of my pocket and laid it on the table. The brother shook his head.

“Mr Wooster,” he said, “we appreciate your generosity, your confidence in us, but we cannot permit this.”

“What Sidney means,” said the girl, “is that you really don’t know anything about us. You mustn’t risk lending all this money without any security at all to two people who, after all, are almost strangers. If I hadn’t thought that you would treat it like some business I would never have dared to come to you.”

“The idea of—er—pledging the pearls at the local pawnbroker shop was, you will readily understand, repugnant to us,” said the brother.

“If you will just give me a receipt, **as a matter of form**⁷⁰—”

⁶⁸ **Colonel Musgrave** – полковник Музгрэйв

⁶⁹ **to meet the cheque when presented** – оплатить чек, когда она будет предъявлен

⁷⁰ **as a matter of form** – соблюдая формальности

“All right!”

I wrote out the receipt and handed it over.

“Here you are,” I said.

The girl took the piece of paper, put it in her bag, grabbed the money and slipped it to brother Sidney, and then, before I knew what was happening, she had darted at me, kissed me, and legged it from the room.

I’m bound to say this surprised me a lot. So sudden and unexpected. I mean, a girl like that. Always been quiet and demure. Through a sort of mist I could see that Jeeves had appeared and was helping the brother on with his coat. His coat was more like a sack than anything else. Then the brother came up to me and grasped my hand.

“I cannot thank you sufficiently, Mr Wooster!”

“Oh, not at all.”

“You have saved my good name. Good name in man or woman,” he said, “is the immediate jewel of their souls. Who steals my purse steals trash. It was mine, it was his, and has been slave to thousands. But he that steals my good name robs me and makes me poor indeed. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Good night, Mr Wooster.”

“Good night, old man,” I said.

I blinked at Jeeves as the door shut.

“Rather a sad affair, Jeeves,” I said.

“Yes, sir.”

“Luckily I happened to have all that money.”

“Well—er—yes, sir.”

“You speak as though you didn’t think much of it.”

“I can’t criticize your actions, sir, but I can say that I think you behaved a little rashly.”

“What, lending that money?”

“Yes, sir. These fashionable French **watering places**⁷¹ are famous for dishonest characters.”

This was incredible.

“Now look here, Jeeves,” I said. “I can stand a lot but now you are going to slander that holy man!”

“Perhaps I am over-suspicious, sir. But I have seen a great deal of these resorts. When I was in the employment of **Lord Frederick Ranelagh**⁷², shortly before I entered your service, his lordship was swindled by a criminal known as **Soapy Sid**⁷³, who was acting us in Monte Carlo with his helper. His helper was a nice girl. I have never forgotten the circumstances.”

“I don’t want to argue with you, Jeeves,” I said, coldly, “but you’re talking nonsense. How could I be cheated? They’ve left me the pearls, haven’t they? Very well, then, think before you speak. You had better have these things hidden in the hotel safe.” I picked up the case and opened it.

“Oh, Lord!”

The case was empty!

“Oh, Jesus!” I said, staring. “So, I’ve been cheated?”

“Precisely, sir. It was in exactly the same manner that Lord Frederick was swindled. While the girl was gratefully embracing his lordship, Soapy Sid substituted a duplicate case for the one containing the pearls and went off with the jewels, the money and the receipt. Later he subsequently demanded from his lordship the return of the pearls, and his lordship was obliged to pay a **heavy sum**⁷⁴ in compensation. It is a simple but effective ruse.”

⁷¹ **watering places** – морские курорты

⁷² **Frederick Ranelagh** – Фредерик Ранелай

⁷³ **Soapy Sid** – Сентиментальный Сид

⁷⁴ **heavy sum** – огромная сумма

I felt as if the floor was moving.

“Soapy Sid? Sid! *Sidney!* Brother Sidney! Why, Jeeves, do you think that parson was Soapy Sid?”

“Yes, sir.”

“But it seems extraordinary. Why, his collar buttoned at the back—I mean, he would have deceived a bishop. Do you really think he was Soapy Sid?”

“Yes, sir. I recognized him directly he came into the room.”

I stared at him.

“You recognized him?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Then, **dash it all**⁷⁵,” I said. “I think you might have told me.”

“I thought it would be enough if I merely extracted the case from the man’s pocket as I assisted him with his coat, sir. Here it is.”

He laid another case on the table beside the first one, and they were alike. I opened it, and there were the good old pearls, smiling up at me. I gazed feebly at Jeeves.

“Jeeves,” I said. “You’re an absolute genius!”

“Yes, sir.”

Thanks to Jeeves I did not lose several thousand pounds.

“It looks to me as though you have saved me. I mean, even that old Sid is hardly likely to have the nerve to come back and retrieve these pearls.”

“I should imagine not, sir.”

“Well, then—Oh, I say, you don’t think they are false?”

“No, sir. These are genuine pearls and extremely valuable.”

“Well, then, dash it, I’ve lost nothing. All right, Jeeves. I’ve paid a hundred pounds but I’ve got a good string of pearls. Am I right or wrong?”

“Hardly that, sir. I think that you will have to restore the pearls.”

“What! To Sid?”

“No, sir. To their rightful owner.”

“But who is their rightful owner?”

“Mrs Gregson, sir.”

“What! How do you know?”

“It was all over the hotel an hour ago that Mrs Gregson’s pearls had disappeared. I was speaking to Mrs Gregson’s maid shortly before you came in and she informed me that the manager of the hotel is now in Mrs Gregson’s suite.”

“And having a bad time, right?”

“I can imagine, sir.”

The situation was beginning to be clear.

“I’ll go and give them back to her, eh?”

“Precisely, sir. And, if I may make the suggestion, I think it might be judicious to stress the fact that they were stolen by—”

“Lord! By the dashed girl she was forcing me to marry!”

“Exactly, sir.”

“Jeeves,” I said, “this is going to be my biggest victory that has ever occurred in the world’s history.”

“It is not unlikely, sir.”

“**It will keep her quiet**⁷⁶ for a bit!”

⁷⁵ **dash it all** – пропади всё пропадом

⁷⁶ **it will keep her quiet** – это её утихомирит

“It should have that effect, sir.”

Long before I reached Aunt Agatha’s lair I could tell that **the hunt was up**⁷⁷. Divers in hotel uniform and many chambermaids were hanging about in the corridor, and through the panels I could hear the Aunt Agatha’s voice. I knocked but no one took any notice, so I went in. I noticed a chambermaid in hysterics, Aunt Agatha and the hotel manager who looked like a bandit.

“Oh, hallo!” I said. “Hallo-allo-allo!”

Aunt Agatha looked at me. No welcoming smile for Bertram.

“Don’t bother me now, Bertie,” she snapped, looking at me as if I were the bandit myself.

“Something wrong?”

“Yes, yes, yes! I’ve lost my pearls.”

“Pearls? Pearls? Pearls?” I said. “No, really? Where did you see them last?”

“What does it matter where I saw them last? They have been stolen.”

Here the hotel manager stepped into the ring and began to talk rapidly in French. The chambermaid whooped in the corner.

“Are you sure you’ve looked everywhere?” I asked.

“Of course I’ve looked everywhere.”

“Well, you know, I’ve often lost my collars and—”

“Don’t drive me mad, Bertie! I have enough to bear without your imbecilities. Oh, be quiet! Be quiet!” she shouted in the sort of voice used by sergeant-majors. And such was the magnetism of her personality that the manager became silent as if he had run into a wall. The chambermaid continued weep.

“I say,” I said, “I think there’s something with this girl. Isn’t she crying or something?”

“She stole my pearls! I am convinced of it.”

Aunt Agatha turned to the manager.

“I tell you, my good man, for the hundredth time—”

“I say,” I said, “I don’t want to interrupt you and all that sort of thing, but aren’t these the pearls you are looking for?”

I pulled the pearls out of my pocket.

“These look like pearls, eh?”

I don’t know when I’ve been happier. It was one of those occasions about which I shall tell my grandchildren—if I ever have any. Aunt Agatha simply deflated before my eyes. It reminded me of when I once saw some fellows letting the gas out of a balloon.

“Where—where—where—” she gurgled.

“I got them from your friend, Miss Hemmingway.”

Even now she didn’t get it.

“From Miss Hemmingway. Miss *Hemmingway*. But—but how did they come into her possession?”

“How?” I said. “Because she stole them. Because that’s how she makes her living. I don’t know what her alias is, but her brother, the chap whose collar buttons at the back, is known in criminal circles as Soapy Sid.”

She blinked.

“Miss Hemmingway a thief! I—I—” She stopped and looked feebly at me. “But how did you manage to recover the pearls, Bertie dear?”

“Never mind,” I said severely. “I have my methods. I must say, Aunt Agatha, I think you have been infernally careless. There’s a printed notice in every bedroom in this place saying that there’s a safe in the manager’s office, where jewellery and valuables ought to be placed, and you absolutely

⁷⁷ **the hunt was up** – охота была в разгаре

disregarded it. And what's the result? The first thief who came along simply walked into your room and took your pearls. And instead of admitting that it was all your fault, you began to bite this poor man. You have been very, very unjust to this poor man."

"Yes, yes," moaned the poor man.

"And this unfortunate girl, what about her? You've accused her of stealing the things on absolutely no evidence."

"*Mais oui, mais ouis, c'est trop fort*⁷⁸!" shouted the Bandit Chief. And the chambermaid looked up inquiringly, as if the sun was breaking through the clouds.

"I shall recompense her," said Aunt Agatha feebly.

"If you take my tip you will do it speedily. If I were her I wouldn't take a penny under twenty pounds. But what surprised me is the way you've unjustly abused this poor man here and tried to give his hotel a bad name!"

"Yes, by damn! It's too bad!" cried the whiskered marvel. "You careless old woman! You give my hotel a bad name! Tomorrow you will leave my hotel!"

And presently having said this, he withdrew, taking the chambermaid with him, the latter with a ten pound note. The manager got his ten as well.

I turned to Aunt Agatha.

"I don't want continue the conversation, Aunt Agatha," I said coldly, "but I should just like to point out before I go that the girl who stole your pearls is the girl you've been forcing me to marry ever since I got here. Good heavens! A good wife, eh? Do you realize that if I had children they would steal my watch while they were sitting on my knees? I'm not complaining, but I must say that another time you might be more careful choosing the girls for me to marry."

I gave her one look, turned on my heel and left the room.

"Ten o'clock, a clear night, and all's well, Jeeves," I said, coming back into the good old suite.

"I am gratified to hear it, sir."

"If twenty pounds would be any use to you, Jeeves—"

"I am much obliged, sir."

There was a pause. And then—well, I did it. I took the cummerbund and handed it over.

"Do you wish me to press this, sir?"

I looked at the cummerbund. It had been very dear to me.

"No," I said, "take it away; give it to the poor—I shall never wear it again."

"Thank you very much, sir," said Jeeves.

⁷⁸ *Mais oui, mais ouis, c'est trop fort!* – О да, о да, это чересчур! (франц.)

5

The Pride of the Woosters is Wounded

If there's one thing I like, it's a quiet life. I'm not one of those fellows who feel restless and depressed if things aren't happening to them all the time. Give me regular meals, a good show with decent music now and then, and one or two friends to talk to, and I ask no more.

I'd returned from Roville with a sort of feeling that from now on nothing could upset me. Aunt Agatha, I imagined, would require at least a year to recover from the Hemmingway affair: and apart from Aunt Agatha there isn't anybody who really annoys me. It seemed to me that the skies were blue, so to speak, and no clouds in sight.

But ... Well, look here, what happened was this, and I ask you if it wasn't enough to rattle anybody.

Once a year Jeeves takes a couple of weeks' vacation and goes to the sea or somewhere to restore his forces. It's pretty bad for me, of course, while he's away. But nothing to do; and he usually manages to find a decent fellow to look after me in his absence.

Well, the time had come again, and Jeeves was in the kitchen giving a new servant few tips about his duties. I was looking for a stamp or something, and I wanted to ask him for it. The silly ass had left the kitchen door open, and I heard his voice.

"You will find Mr Wooster," he was saying to the new servant, "an exceedingly pleasant and amiable young gentleman, but not intelligent. By no means intelligent. Mentally he is negligible—quite negligible."

Well, I mean to say, what!

I called for my hat and stick and went out. But I have good memory, if you know what I mean. We Woosters do not forget anything. At least, we do—appointments, and people's birthdays, and letters to post, and all that—but not an absolute insult like the above.

I dropped in at the **oyster-bar at Buck's**⁷⁹. I needed something strong at the moment, because I was on my way to lunch with Aunt Agatha. A frightful ordeal, believe me or believe me not, even though I thought that after what had happened at Roville she would be in a subdued and amiable mood. Suddenly a muffled voice hailed me from the north-east, and, turning round, I saw young Bingo Little propped up in a corner, eating a huge chunk of bread and cheese.

"Hallo-allo-allo!" I said. "Haven't seen you for ages. You've not been in here lately, have you?"

"No. I've been living out in the country."

"Eh?" I said, for Bingo's hatred for the country was well known. "And where?"

"Down in Hampshire, at a place called **Ditteredge**⁸⁰."

"No, really? I know some people who've got a house there. **The Glossops**⁸¹. Have you met them?"

"Why, that's where I'm staying!" said young Bingo. "I'm tutoring the Glossop kid."

"What for?" I said. I couldn't see young Bingo as a tutor. Though, of course, he got a degree at Oxford.

"What for? For money, of course! An absolute champion came last in the second race at **Haydock Park**⁸²," said young Bingo, with some bitterness, "and I dropped my entire month's allowance. I went to the agents and got a job. I've been down there three weeks."

⁷⁹ **oyster-bar at Buck's** – устричный бар у Бака

⁸⁰ **Ditteredge** – Диттеридж

⁸¹ **the Glossops** – Глоссопы

⁸² **Haydock Park** – Хэйдокский парк

"I haven't met the Glossop kid."

"Don't!" advised Bingo, briefly.

"The only one of the family I really know is the girl."

I had hardly spoken these words when the most extraordinary change came over young Bingo's face. His eyes bulged, his cheeks flushed, and his **Adam's apple**⁸³ hopped about like one of those rubber balls on the top of the fountain in a **shooting-gallery**⁸⁴.

"Oh, Bertie!" he said, in a strangled sort of voice.

I looked at the poor guy anxiously. I knew that he was always falling in love with someone, but it didn't seem possible that even he could have fallen in love with **Honoriam Glossop**⁸⁵. To me the girl was simply nothing more nor less than a pot of poison. One of those dashed large, brainy, strenuous, dynamic girls you see so many of these days. She had been at **Girton**⁸⁶, where, in addition to enlarging her brain to the most frightful extent, she had gone in for every kind of sport and developed the physique of a wrestler. The effect she had on me whenever she appeared was to make me want to slide into a cellar and lie low till she went away.

But there was no mistaking it. The love light was in the blighter's eyes.

"I worship her, Bertie! I worship the very ground she treads on!" continued the patient, in a loud, penetrating voice. Fred Thompson and one or two fellows had come in, and McGarry, the fellow behind the bar, was listening very attentively. But Bingo did not care. He always reminds me of the hero of a musical comedy who takes the centre of the stage, gathers the boys round him in a circle, and tells them all about his love at the top of his voice.

"Have you told her?"

"No, **I haven't the nerve**⁸⁷. But we walk together in the garden most evenings, and it sometimes seems to me that there is a look in her eyes."

"I know that look. Like a sergeant-major."

"Nothing of the kind! Like a tender goddess."

"Half a second, **old thing**⁸⁸," I said. "Are you sure we're talking about the same girl? The one I mean is Honoriam. Perhaps there's a younger sister or something I've not heard of?"

"Her name is Honoriam," bawled Bingo reverently.

"And she reminds you a tender goddess?"

"She does."

"God bless you!" I said.

"She walks in beauty like the night of cloudless climes and starry skies; and all that's best of dark and bright meet in her aspect and her eyes. Another bit of bread and cheese," he said to the lad behind the bar.

"You're **keeping your strength up**⁸⁹," I said.

"This is my lunch. I've got to meet **Oswald**⁹⁰ at Waterloo at one-fifteen, to catch the train back. I brought him up to town to see the dentist."

"Oswald? Is that the kid?"

"Yes. Very pestilential."

"Pestilential! That reminds me, I'm lunching with my Aunt Agatha. I'll have to run away, or I'll be late."

⁸³ **Adam's apple** – адамово яблоко, кадык

⁸⁴ **shooting-gallery** – тир

⁸⁵ **Honoriam Glossop** – Гонория Глоссоп

⁸⁶ **Girton** – Гиртон (один из колледжей Кембриджского университета)

⁸⁷ **I haven't the nerve** – я не смею

⁸⁸ **old thing** – старина

⁸⁹ **you're keeping your strength up** – ты набираешься сил

⁹⁰ **Oswald** – Освальд

I hadn't seen Aunt Agatha since that little affair of the pearls; and, while I didn't anticipate any great pleasure from eating something in her society, I must say that there was one topic of conversation I felt confident she wouldn't touch on, and that was the subject of my matrimonial future.

But I don't understand women. At all. We'd hardly exchanged a word about the weather, when she told me:

"Bertie," she said, "I've been thinking again about you and how necessary it is that you should get married. I admit that I was dreadfully mistaken in my opinion of that terrible, hypocritical girl at Renville, but this time there is no danger of an error. By great good luck I have found the very wife for you, a girl whom I have only recently met, but whose family is above suspicion. She has plenty of money, too, though that does not matter in your case. The great point is that she is strong, self-reliant and sensible, and will counterbalance the deficiencies and weaknesses of your character. She has met you; and, while there is naturally much in you of which she disapproves, she does not dislike you. I know this, for I have talked to her—guardedly, of course—and I am sure you have only to make the first advance—"

"Who is it?" I would have said it long before, but the shock had made me swallow a bit of roll the wrong way. "Who is it?"

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