



# MY MAN JEEVES

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**A master of English prose, born in 1881 became an admired English humorist and wrote novels, short stories and plays. He enjoyed enormous popular success during a career that lasted more than seventy years**

This was the earliest of his short story collections to mention Jeeves in the title, and it is a very early Jeeves/Wooster story. It is brilliant, delightful and charming. In the book he brings Bertie Wooster and Jeeves to life with elegance and charm. His love of the material is evident and he uses prototypical early 20th

century-era phrases, which gives this story its distinct flavour and style. Much of the story is based around Jeeves, who is forever coming to the rescue of the hapless Bertie Wooster. It will delight anyone with a taste for pithy buffoonery and mishaps. Bertie has been banished to New York by his Aunt Agatha and is living the

good life, but is continually getting involved in his friends' dramas in which he needs Jeeves to come up with solutions to resolve them. This is a story that is set at a time when the British aristocracy had man servants and, although perhaps well educated, Bertie Wooster just doesn't have the cunning to work things out.

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## LESSON 4

"Jeeves," I said, "this is getting a bit much." "Sir?" he replied with cold respectfulness. "You know very well what I mean. This lad seems to have **chucked** all the principles of a well-spent boyhood." "Yes, sir." "Well, I will get blamed. You know what my Aunt Agatha is like." "Yes, sir."

"Jeeves," I said, "haven't you any scheme up your sleeve for coping with this **blighter**?" "No, sir." And he **shimmered** off to his lair, the obstinate devil. It was shortly after this that young Motty got the idea of bringing his pals back in the **small hours** to continue the revelry in my home. This was where I began to **crack under the strain**.

The next night I came home early, after a lonely dinner at a place which I'd chosen because there didn't seem any chance of meeting Motty there. The sitting room was quite dark and I was just moving to switch on the light, when there was a sort of explosion and something took hold of my trouser-leg.

Living with Motty had reduced me to such an extent that I was simply unable to cope with this. I jumped backwards with a loud yell of

**anguish**, and tumbled out into the hall just as Jeeves came out of his **den** to see what the matter was. "Did you call, sir?" "Jeeves, there's something in there that grabs you by the leg." "That would be Rollo, sir." "Eh?"

"I would have warned you of his presence, but I did not hear you come in. His temper is a little uncertain at present, as he has not yet settled down." "Who the hell is Rollo?" "His lordship's bull-terrier, sir. He won him in a **raffle** and tied him to the leg of the table. If you will allow me, sir, I will go in and switch on the light."

There really is nobody like Jeeves. He walked straight into the sitting room without so much as a **quiver**. What's more, his **magnetism** was such that the wretched animal, instead of pinning him by the leg, calmed down as if he had had a **bromide**, and rolled over on his back with all his paws in the air.

If Jeeves had been his rich uncle he couldn't have been more friendly. Yet when he caught sight of me again, he got all **worked up** and wanted to start chewing on me where he had left off.

"Rollo is not used to you yet, sir," said Jeeves, regarding the threatening **quadruped** in an admiring sort of way. "He is an excellent watchdog." "I don't want a watchdog to keep me out of my rooms," I said angrily. "No, sir."

A few days later I asked Jeeves, "Is Lord Pershore in?" "No, sir." "Do you expect him back to dinner?" "No, sir." "Where is he?" "In prison, sir." "In prison?" "Yes, sir." I lowered myself into a chair. "Why?" I said. "He assaulted a **constable**, sir." "Lord Pershore assaulted a constable." "Yes, sir." I digested this. "But, Jeeves, this is **frightful**." "Sir?"

"What will Lady Malvern say when she finds out?" "I do not fancy that her ladyship will find out, sir." "But she'll come back and want to know where he is." "I rather fancy, sir, that his lordship's bit of time will have run out by then." "But supposing it hasn't?"

"In that event, sir, it may be **judicious** to **prevaricate** a little." "How?" "If I might make the suggestion, sir, I should inform her ladyship that his lordship has left for a short visit to Boston." "Why Boston?" "It's a very interesting location, sir."

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The more I looked at it in that way, the sounder this prison **wheeze** seemed to me. There was no doubt in the world that prison was **just what the doctor ordered** for Motty. It was the only thing that could have straightened him out.

I was sorry him, but after all I reflected, a man who had lived all his life with Lady Malvern in a small village in the England wouldn't have much to worry about in a prison and I began to feel happy again.

Life went on so comfortably and peacefully for a couple of weeks that I'd almost forgotten such a person as Motty existed. The only **flaw** in the scheme of things was that Jeeves was still pained and distant. It wasn't anything he said or did, but there was something about him all the time.

And then Lady Malvern came back, a good bit ahead of schedule. I hadn't been expecting her for days. I'd forgotten how time had been slipping along. She turned up one morning while I was still in bed sipping tea and thinking of this and that. Jeeves flowed in with the announcement that he had

just sat her down in the sitting room. I **draped** a few **garments** round me and went in.

There she was, sitting in the same **armchair**, looking as massive as ever. The only difference was that she didn't uncover the teeth, as she had done the first time. "Good morning," I said. "So you've got back." "I am back, yes."

There was something **bleak** about her **tone**, rather as if she had swallowed an east wind. This I took to be due to the fact that she probably hadn't had breakfast yet. It's only after a bit of breakfast that I'm able to regard the world with that sunny cheeriness.

"Won't you have an egg or something? Or a sausage or something?" "No, thank you." She spoke as if she belonged to an anti-sausage society or a committee for the **suppression** of eggs. There was a bit of a silence. "I called on you last night," she said, "but you were out." "Awfully sorry. Have you had a pleasant trip?" "Extremely, thank you."

"Did you see everything? Niagara Falls, Yellowstone

Park, and the Grand Canyon?" "I saw a great deal." There was another slight silence and then Jeeves floated silently into the dining room and began to lay the breakfast table. "I hope Wilmot was not in your way, Mr. Wooster?"

I had been wondering when she was going to mention Motty. "No, we hit it off splendidly." "You were his constant companion, then?" "Absolutely. We were always together. We saw all the sights. We'd take in the Museum of Art in the morning and have a bit of lunch at some good vegetarian restaurant and then **toddle along** to a concert in the afternoon, and home to an early dinner.

"We usually played **dominoes** after dinner and then early to bed for a refreshing sleep. We had a great time. I was very sorry when he went away to Boston." "Wilmot is in Boston?" "Yes. I ought to have let you know, but we didn't know where you were. Yes, Motty went off to Boston." "Are you're sure he went to Boston?"

I called out to Jeeves, who was now messing about in the next room with forks and so

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forth: "Jeeves, Lord Pershore didn't change his mind about going to Boston, did he?" "No, sir." "I thought I was right. Yes, Motty went to Boston."

"Then how do you account, Mr. Wooster, for the fact that when I went yesterday afternoon to Blackwell's Island prison, to secure material for my book, I saw Wilmot there, dressed in a striped suit, seated beside a pile of stones with a hammer in his hands?"

I tried to think of something to say, but nothing came. One has to be a lot **broader about the forehead** than I am to handle a **jolt** like this. I strained my brain until it creaked, but nothing stirred. I was dumb, which was lucky because I would have only continued to get interminable **flippancy** out of my system. Lady Malvern had been **bottling it up** but now it came out with a rush:

"So this is how you have looked after my boy, Mr. Wooster. So this is how you have abused my trust. I left him in your charge, thinking that I could rely on you to shield him from evil. He came to you innocent, unused to the temptations of a large city, and you led him astray."

I hadn't any remarks to make. All I could think of was the picture of Aunt Agatha drinking all this in and reaching out to sharpen the **hatchet** against my return. "You deliberately..." Far away in the misty distance a soft voice spoke: "If I might explain, your ladyship."

Jeeves had projected himself in from the dining-room and materialised on the rug. Lady Malvern tried to freeze him with a look, but you can't do that sort of thing to Jeeves. He is look-proof. "I imagine that your ladyship, has misunderstood Mr. Wooster, and that he may have given you the impression that he was in New York when his lordship was removed.

"When Mr. Wooster informed your ladyship that his lordship had gone to Boston, he was relying on the version I had given him of his lordship's movements. Mr. Wooster was away, visiting a friend in the country at the time and knew nothing of the matter until your ladyship informed him."

Lady Malvern gave a kind of grunt. It didn't **rattle** Jeeves. "I feared Mr. Wooster might be disturbed if he knew the truth, as he is so attached to his

lordship and has taken such pains to look after him, so I took the liberty of telling him that his lordship had gone away for a visit. It might have been hard for Mr. Wooster to believe that his lordship had gone to prison voluntarily and from the best motives, but your ladyship, knowing him better, will readily understand."

"What," demanded Lady Malvern, **goggling** at him. "Did you say that Lord Pershore went to prison voluntarily?" "If I might explain, your ladyship. I think that your parting words made a deep impression on his lordship. I have frequently heard him speak to Mr. Wooster of his desire to do something to follow your instructions and collect material for your book on America.

Mr. Wooster will **bear me out** when I say that his lordship was frequently extremely depressed at the thought that he was doing so little to help. The idea of making a personal examination into the prison system of the country occurred to his lordship very suddenly one night. He **embraced** it eagerly. There was no **restraining** him."

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"Surely, your ladyship," said Jeeves, "it is more reasonable to suppose that a gentleman of his lordship's character went to prison of his **own volition** than that he committed some breach of the law which necessitated his arrest?"

Lady Malvern blinked then she got up. "Mr. Wooster," she said, "I apologise **wholeheartedly**. I have done you an injustice. I should have known Wilmot better. I should have had more faith in his pure, fine spirit." "Absolutely!" I said.

"Your breakfast is ready, sir," said Jeeves. I sat down and **dallied** in a dazed sort of way with a poached egg. "Jeeves," I said, "you are certainly a life-saver." "Thank you, sir." "Nothing would have convinced my Aunt Agatha that I hadn't lured that blighter into riotous living." "I fancy you are right, sir."

I **champed** my egg for a bit. I was most awfully moved by the way Jeeves had rallied round. Something seemed to tell me that this was an occasion that called for rich rewards. For a moment I hesitated. Then I made up my mind.

"Jeeves." "Sir?" "That pink tie." "Yes, sir?" "Burn it." "Thank you, sir." "And, Jeeves." "Yes, sir?" "Take a taxi and get me that Longacre hat, as worn by John Drew." "Thank you very much, sir."

I felt steadied and felt as if the clouds had rolled away and all was as it used to be. I felt like one of those people in novels who calls off the fight with his wife in the last chapter and decides to forget and forgive. I felt I wanted to do all sorts of other things to show Jeeves that I appreciated him.

"Jeeves," I said, "it isn't enough. Is there anything else you would like?" "Yes, sir. If I may make the suggestion... fifty dollars." "Fifty dollars?" "It will enable me to pay a debt of honour, sir. I owe it to his lordship." "You owe Lord Pershore fifty dollars?"

"Yes, sir. I happened to meet him in the street the night his lordship was arrested. I had been thinking a good deal about the most suitable method of **inducing** him to abandon his mode of living, sir. His lordship was a little over-excited at the time and I fancy that he mistook me for a friend of his.

"At any rate when I took the liberty of **wagering** him fifty dollars that he would not punch a passing policeman in the eye, he accepted the bet very cordially and won it."

I produced my wallet and counted out a hundred. "Take this, Jeeves," I said. "Fifty isn't enough. Do you know, Jeeves, you're...well, you absolutely stand alone." "I endeavour to give satisfaction, sir," said Jeeves.

Sometimes of a morning, as I've sat in bed sucking down the early cup of tea and watched Jeeves **flitting about** the room and putting out the raiment for the day, I've wondered what I would do if he ever took it into his head to leave me. It's not so bad now I'm in New York, but in London the anxiety was frightful. There used to be all sorts of attempts on the part of fellows of low worth to sneak him away from me.

The thing is, you see, that Jeeves is so competent. You can even spot it in the way he puts studs on my shirts. I rely on him absolutely in every crisis, and he never lets me down. And, what's more, he can always be counted on to resolve any **dilemma**.

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## VOCABULARY

**Chucked:** To toss, throw with a quick motion.

**Blighter:** Old fashioned, normally meaning a child, especially an annoying one.

**Shimmered:** To shine with a subdued flickering light.

**Small hours:** Very early in the morning.

**Crack under the strain:** Idiom for having a mental or emotional collapse because of continued work or stress.

**Anguish:** Severe mental or physical pain or suffering.

**Den:** A wild mammal's hidden home, a lair.

**Raffle:** A means of raising money by selling numbered tickets, similar to a lottery.

**Quiver:** To tremble, as from cold or strong emotion.

**Magnetism:** The ability to attract and charm people.

**Bromide:** Old fashioned word for a sedative containing potassium bromide.

**Worked up:** Excessively affected by emotion.

**Quadruped:** An animal that has all four limbs as in a dog.

**Constable:** Member of the police, usually in a small town.

**Frightful:** Used for emphasis, especially of something bad.

**Judicious:** Using good judgement, wise.

**Prevaricate:** Procrastinate, put off doing something.

**A wheeze:** British informal, a clever or amusing scheme, idea or trick.

**Just what the doctor ordered:** British for exactly what is wanted or needed.

**Flaw:** Something that spoils the perfection of, defect, fault.

**Drape:** Cover or wrap loosely with folds of cloth.

**Garments:** Clothes.

**Armchair:** A large, comfortable chair with side supports for a person's arms.

**Bleak:** Gloomy and sombre, providing no encouragement, depressing.

**Tone:** Tone of voice.

**Suppress:** To curb, inhibit, or even stop.

**Toddle along:** Idiom for walking with short, unsteady steps.

**Dominoes:** Game with small, rectangular object with dots on it.

**Broader about the forehead:** Cleverer.

**Jolt:** Idiot.

**Flippancy:** Marked by disrespectful levity or casualness.

**Bottle it up:** To stop yourself from showing negative emotions like anger, disappointment and embarrassment.

**Hatchet:** A small axe with a short handle.

**Rattle:** Make someone nervous, worried or irritated.

**Goggling:** To stare or leer.

**Bear someone out:** To be patient until someone substantiates or confirms something.

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## VOCABULARY

**Embraced:** To welcome someone or something with open arms, hug, accept completely.

**Restrain:** To prevent someone from doing something, keep under control or within limits.

**Own volition:** The act of making a conscious decision, the power of choosing for yourself.

**Wholeheartedly:** Showing complete sincerity and commitment.

**Dallied:** Occupy oneself with something else in a careless or unserious fashion, dawdle, delay.

**Champed:** Vigorous chewing or biting movements.

**Induce:** To persuade or influence as to some action or state of mind.

**Wager:** To bet on, gamble.

**Flitting about:** To move lightly and swiftly, fly, dart or skim along.

**Dilemma:** A difficult or insoluble situation or problem.

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## Q&A

**Question 1:** What was Motty doing to cause Bertie Wooster to crack under the strain?

**Question 5:** What excuse did Jeeves give about Motty going to prison voluntarily and from the best motives?

**Overview:** Write in your own words what you thought of the story so far and your interpretation of its meaning.

**Question 2:** What happened to Lord Pershore so that he was unable to come home one day?

**Question 6:** Why did Jeeves say lordship was extremely depressed that he was doing so little to help?

**Question 3:** With Motty's predicament, why did Jeeves think it judicious to prevaricate?

**Question 7:** When Jeeves rallied for Bertie, what did he immediately do for Jeeves as a way of thank you?

**Question 4:** When Lady Malvern told Bertie Wooster she had seen Motty in Blackwell's Island prison, what was Bertie's reaction?

**Question 8:** How do you think Bertie would cope if it wasn't for his man Jeeves?