

The novel opens with a brief flashforward of Bertie and Jeeves driving home, with Bertie remarking that there is an expression, something about Joy, that describes what he has just been through. Jeeves helpfully supplies the phrase, "Joy cometh in the morning". Bertie proceeds to narrate the events that occurred.

Jeeves wants to go fishing at the village of Steeple Bumbleigh, but Bertie refuses because his fearsome Aunt Agatha and her second husband, the irascible Lord Worplesdon, live there at Bumbleigh Hall. Bertie makes it up to Jeeves by buying him a gift, a new edition of the works of Spinoza. In the bookshop, Bertie meets Florence Craye, Worplesdon's daughter, a serious, intellectual woman to whom Bertie was once engaged. She mistakenly thinks that Bertie is trying to improve his mind by reading Spinoza and her own book Spindrift that the bookshop keeper mistakenly gives him. Shortly afterwards, Bertie meets his college friend D'Arcy "Stilton" Cheesewright, who is engaged to Florence. Meanwhile, Jeeves has been consulted by Worplesdon, who wants to arrange a clandestine meeting with an American businessman, Chichester Clam. Jeeves suggests that Bertie stay at a cottage (called Wee Nooke) in Steeple Bumbleigh, where the two businessmen could meet in secret. Bertie is incensed but calms when he learns his Aunt Agatha is away from Bumbleigh Hall. She does, however, instruct Bertie to pick up and deliver a brooch as a birthday present for Florence, her step-daughter.

Bertie goes to Steeple Bumbleigh with his friend, Zenobia "Nobby" Hopwood. She is engaged to Bertie's friend George "Boko" Fittleworth, who lives in the village. Lord Worplesdon, Nobby's guardian, does not approve of Boko and therefore has not consented to the marriage. On arrival, Bertie runs into Stilton who is a village policeman. Stilton believes Bertie is attempting to woo Florence and tells him to leave. Nobby tells Bertie that Florence wishes that Stilton be an MP but he refused. At Wee Nooke, Bertie encounters Florence's troublesome young brother Edwin, a boy scout. As one of his daily acts of kindness, Edwin attempts to clean the chimney using gunpowder and then paraffin, only to burn down the cottage. Lord Worplesdon blames Bertie for the fire and ruining his meeting with Clam. He invites Jeeves

to stay at the Hall, but Bertie has to lodge with Boko. Bertie later discovers that he has lost the brooch, so he sends Jeeves to London to obtain a replacement.

After welcoming Bertie to his cottage, Boko tells Bertie his plan to win Worplesdon's approval: he will pretend to stop a burglar at the Hall, with Bertie playing the role of burglar. Despite his misgivings, Bertie agrees. Before he can break in, Bertie is interrupted by Edwin. He then runs into Jeeves, who says that Worplesdon and Clam plan to meet in the potting shed as Wee Nooke has been burned down. Boko mistakes Clam for an intruder and locks him in the shed, enraging Worplesdon. When Worplesdon insists that the imprisoned Clam is not a burglar, Boko (unaware of the plan) heavily berates him, straining their relationship even more. Jeeves devises a new plan where Boko come to Worpleson's defense while Bertie insults Worplesdon, but Bertie refuses. Edwin tells Bertie that Florence and Stilton have fallen out and that he found the original brooch and gave it to Florence. Florence confirms the engagement is over after Stilton criticised Modern Enlightened Thought. Bertie tries to reason with her but instead she kisses him believing that he is being selfless and that the brooch was a present from him and renews their engagement, much to his horror.

Boko, once engaged to Florence himself, agrees to disclose how he alienated her if Bertie insults Worplesdon. Jeeves, however, discovers that Boko alienated her by kicking Edwin. Bertie decides to do the same, yet Florence actually approves, as Edwin had messed up her scrap album. Nobby promises Bertie to show Florence a letter in which he insulted her if Bertie insults Worplesdon. Bertie visits his uncle's study, but before the plan can proceed Boko is escorted from the grounds by a gardener. Worplesdon receives Bertie warmly after hearing he kicked Edwin. Jeeves advises that Bertie suggest to Worplesdon that he and Clam meet in disguise at the fancy-dress ball to take place that night. Worplesdon wears a Sindbad the Sailor costume that Bertie had brought for himself. Boko drives to London to buy himself and Bertie new costumes but brings back the wrong bag. Jeeves steals Stilton's police uniform for Bertie so he can attend the ball and persuade Worplesdon to approve

Nobby marrying Boko. Worplesdon's negotiations with Clam are successfully concluded by the time Bertie arrives. Worplesdon warms to Boko when he hears that he has also kicked Edwin and will shortly be starting a job far away in Hollywood, six thousand miles away. He approves the marriage.

In the morning, Bertie discovers that Worplesdon has been accidentally locked in Boko's garage overnight. Worplesdon emerges furious with Boko and withdraws his approval of the marriage. Worplesdon is horrified, however, when Jeeves informs him that Aunt Agatha, who disapproves of all fancy-dress balls, has returned unexpectedly and wants to know where Worplesdon has been. Jeeves suggests that Worplesdon say he spent the evening discussing the wedding plans with Nobby and Boko, then slept at Boko's cottage overnight. Worplesdon agrees, consenting to the marriage again. Stilton arrives on the scene and tries to arrest Bertie for stealing his uniform, but Worplesdon gives Bertie a false alibi. Nobby informs Bertie that Edwin has destroyed the insulting letter that Bertie wanted her to show to Florence. Stilton resigns from the police force in disgust at Worplesdon's underhanded behaviour which causes Florence to reconcile with him to Bertie's delight. Bertie prepares to face his Aunt Agatha with Worplesdon but Jeeves confesses that he lied about her returning.

With no reason to stay, the pair escape from Steeple Bumpleigh by car. Bertie tries to remember an expression which he feels sums up recent events, something about Joy, but notes that he already narrated all this before.