

P.G. WODEHOUSE
HOT WATER



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Amid confusion of assumed identities and one real undercover detective, 'Packy' Patrick Franklyn, rich ex-Yale footballer, wants Jane Opal to be happy. Jane's fiancé poor writer 'Egg' Blair Eggleston is touted by Packy's fiancée culture-lofty Lady Beatrice Bracken. Rakish 'Veek' Vicomte de Blissac returns for holiday festival where men drink, fight, and find love - or at least reward from safe.

Hot Water Details

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Author : P.G. Wodehouse

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From Reader Review Hot Water for online ebook

Monika Thakur says

Light hearted fun.

booklady says

Hot Water is a delightful farce set in the north of France at the Chateau Blissac, Brittany and in London, containing a mixture of romance, intrigue and Wodehouse's brand of humor.

The story recounts the various romantic and criminal goings-on during a house party, hosted by the Vicomte Blissac. It was another reminder to me what a 'serious business' comedy is. Supposedly one of Wodehouse's more elaborate farces; I appreciated 'visiting with a very different set of characters—not that I don't enjoy the usual Blanding's and Jeeves & Wooster set.

Most enjoyable!

Evangeline says

One of Wodehouse's best works! The plot was excellent, with a few unexpected twists that made for an exciting read. It also helped that the main character, Packy Franklyn, was thoroughly likeable. Fairly intelligent (unlike Bertie and some of the other young men that Wodehouse commonly portrays), warm-hearted and a 'man of action', his bright ideas enable him to get out of quite a few scrapes and eventually save the day!

Aaron Wittwer says

This is the most intricately woven Wodehouse that I've read so far. A bubble map or flow chart type diagram would be required to fully explain the plot. Yet, somehow, it still feels like the same simple, pleasant, wonderful Wodehouse. This story finds around a dozen or so characters converging on the Château Blissac. Only about half of them are who they say they are. Nearly everyone has designs on breaking into the Château's safe for one reason or another. And nobody has a clue what is going on. Hilarity ensues as the chaos continues to build until reaching that always fantastic breaking point. Don't worry though, as with all Wodehouse, everything works out in the end. Brilliantly written with a surplus of wit and charm, sure to leave you smiling for days.

Tamizhmarai says

The plot gets inextricably entangled towards the end and just when you begin to think that this time PG Wodehouse has overreached himself, he pulls off a fantastic climax and brings about a denouement that leaves everyone happy, satisfied and smiling. Brilliant!

Douglas Wilson says

Excellent. And I finished it again in August of 2017.

Laura H. says

One of the funniest books I've ever read; Wodehouse is quickly becoming one of my very favorite authors.

Beau Stucki says

Each Wodehouse novel I read is in such top form that it causes a sort of inner turmoil (pleasant as it may be) and puts my rating system into confusion. If this one was better than the last should I have rated the others lower? What's greater than 5? What if I had started here instead of there? Perhaps as with cameras, so with Wodehouse novels: the best one is the one you have in hand.

Ratings are arbitrary in the end, I suppose. Needless to say, I found this book firing on all cylinders.

Roger Pettit says

In my view, PG Wodehouse is the greatest ever writer of English in terms of pure style. His prose is elegant, light, airy and seemingly effortless. There can surely be no more readable a writer. Wodehouse chose to devote his enviable talent to the creation of stories that can best be described as trifles. They are invariably fluffy comedies with preposterous plots and larger than life characters. Their sole purpose is entertainment. He is, of course, best known for his Jeeves and Wooster tales, which are wonderful. I have a particular fondness for his Ukridge stories. 'Hot Water' is typical of his non-series novels. With its convoluted plot and reliance on coincidence, it's the literary equivalent of a Georges Feydau stage farce. It also reminds me of the madcap theatre productions that master farceur Ray Cooney wrote, directed and starred in in London's West End in the 1970s and 1980s.

Set in the 1920s in Brittany, France, 'Hot Water' features J Wellington Gedge. Gedge is a young Californian who used to be rich but who is now dependent on his wife, the widow of an American oil multi-millionaire, for his money. They live in Chateau Blissac, in a town called St Rocque. The pushy and domineering Mrs Gedge is determined to secure her husband's appointment as the United States Ambassador to France. Gedge, who likes a quiet life, wants no such position. Into this mix come Jane Opal and her father, Senator Ambrose Opal. Jane is engaged to novelist Blair Eggleston but is really in love with Packy Franklyn, a Yale football star. Franklyn is engaged to the very beautiful and controlling Lady Beatrice Bracken. Also involved are two American low-level hoodlums and Vicomte de Blissac, the heir to Chateau Blissac. These are the principal characters in a plot that involves safe-breaking, blackmail, impersonation, confidence trickery and

theft.

It's all good fun and is a great pleasure to read. There are numerous twists and turns and, because of that, the reader perhaps needs to concentrate on the precise details of the plot rather more than is usual with a Wodehouse story. Appreciation of comedy is, of course, a very personal thing. It's therefore difficult to summarise Wodehouse's appeal. Novelist Evelyn Waugh perhaps did so best in this citation, which appears (usually in abbreviated form) on the dust jackets of many of Wodehouse's books: 'Mr Wodehouse's idyllic world can never stale. He will continue to release future generations from captivity that may be more irksome than our own. He has made a world for us to live in and delight in.' A good example of Wodehouse's beautifully simple but seductive writing style is this brief extract from chapter 1 of 'Hot Water':

'Who's going to be Ambassador to France?' said Mr Gedge, mystified.

He could not have asked a more convenient question. It enabled Mrs Gedge to place the salient facts before him crisply and without further preamble.

'You are', she said."

That succinct prose sums up Wodehouse's exquisite way with words and makes reading his stories so pleasurable. 'Hot Water' is a very enjoyable light comedy. I loved it. 9/10.

Wendy says

Mistaken identities. Compromising letters. Unfortunate engagements. Long-lost loves. Confidence men and safe-blowers and drunk people. Deliciously absurd and absurdly delicious, this is typical Wodehouse, and I mean that in the best way possible. There are reasons I love Wodehouse so much, and this book embodies all of them.

The only problem with his books is how quickly you get through them, even when you're making an effort to savor them. Still, in the end, you're left with a warm, satisfied feeling, similar to drinking hot cocoa but not limited to your stomach. I highly recommend all Wodehouse, but this one in particular is especially lovely.

Ian says

Like Wodehouse's book "French Leave", this is a twist on the usual Wodehouse with a plot centred on Americans in France, no doubt to appeal to his growing American public at that time. The format doesn't work that well for me.

Akshay Kumar says

Subtle humour is probably the most challenging kind of humour there is. The art of making people laugh with simple, but insightful observations as opposed to crude, in-your-face one-liners has been attempted by many, but mastered by few. The stalwart of subtle humour in the vocal form is undoubtedly Jerry Seinfeld.

In literature, there is no one to match the genius and the cutthroat delivery of P. G. Wodehouse.

“*Hot Water*” is a work testimonial to Wodehouse’s impeccable writing flair. After Senator Opal’s compromising letter to a bootlegger lands in the custody of Mrs. Gedge, Packy Franklin, an American millionaire and the soon to be son-in-law of the Earl of Stableford, offers to help him and his daughter, Jane, retrieve it. But, little do they know that they aren’t the only ones planning to rob the Château Blissac.

The “robbery gone wrong” scenario almost always presents an excellent setting for a comedy, and this one was no exception. Packy was a wonderful protagonist, with his lovable nature and timely quips at the forefront from the very beginning. His awkward exchanges with the senator and his daughter were a thing of comedic gold, and I wish there had been more of them. The tried and tested comedic pairing of the fun-loving and carefree Packy with the quick tempered and rigid Opal turned out to be a masterstroke.

The story is a satirical take on the mannerisms of the upper class. The overbearing nature of Beatrice Bracken, forcing her fiancé to attend the opera, book signings and meet other royal dignitaries doesn’t sit well with Packy, whose sportsman spirit didn’t care for interacting with the drab, tight-lipped VIPs just because they were acquaintances of the royal family. The commanding Mrs. Gedge mirrors this quality as well, as she tries to get her husband appointed the French Ambassador, much to the dismay of Mr. Gedge, who wants nothing to do with the mammoth responsibility. Then there is Blair Eggleston, a renowned writer, whose flair for romance that is apparent from his books, fails to manifest itself in his own demeanour.

The characters all get their share of the spotlight, right from the strong, but slightly dim-witted Soup Slattery, to the bumbling Vicomte, who despite his absence for a good part of the book, manages to incite a few laughs. Each sub-plot is adequately emphasised, just enough to stay relevant without stealing Packy’s thunder.

Overall, “*Hot Water*” is an exceptional comedy that delivers on all fronts – it is hilarious, but not slapstick; the jokes are subtle but don’t get lost between the lines. This is a great book to read if you’re looking for something to lighten your mood while you lounge on your porch on a lazy Sunday afternoon.

Barry says

Wodehouse is hilarious. A smile on every page!

Tim says

Bit below par it seemed to me. I was thinking about the cliche "X on a bad day is still better than most Ys at their best", and it seems to me that it doesn't apply here: sometimes with Wodehouse you get the impression he's straining after his own tone, and when he misses it, he can be pretty pedestrian. Example: there's a little running bit on the theme of an imaginary German sociologist with precise statistics for how young men rejected in love will react. On a good day Wodehouse could no doubt be hilarious with this, but in fact he just reels off a few labouredly facetiously precise figures for exactly when the person concerned does this and that, and tells it all in lengthy convoluted sentences with the verb right at the end. Ho ho.

I write - as you can see if you look at my stats here - as a huge Wodehouse fan. This is like flat lager for

sheer enjoyment value. Well, half-flat lager maybe. Just about swallowable if there's no good stuff around and you really need a drink.

Odd really, considering it was written in 1932, as he was gearing up to, and indeed already producing, some of his greatest stuff.

John Frankham says

This time, I listened to Jonathan Cecil's narration, rather than reading it. Usually brilliant, this was a bit of a struggle as so many of the characters are American, French, or Americans pretending to be French. But, ignoring this, I thought some of the exposition was more laboured than Wodehouse was at his very best, but the dialogue was as good as usual, and the complicated, but easy to follow, plotting was absolutely stunning, with some good surprises near the end. So, overall a 4*.

The GR blurb is:

"At French seaside Château Blissac, J. Wellington Gedge from California wants to go home. His larger richer wife wants him to be a Paris Ambassador, blackmails Senator Opal, publicly dry, with a letter to his bootlegger in her safe. Jewels attract criminals tough 'Soup' Slattery and 'Oily' Carlisle, who mourn female partners who have deserted them.

Amid confusion of assumed identities and one real undercover detective, 'Packy' Patrick Franklyn, rich ex-Yale footballer, wants Jane Opal to be happy. Jane's fiancé poor writer 'Egg' Blair Eggleston is touted by Packy's fiancée culture-lofty Lady Beatrice Bracken. Rakish 'Veek' Vicomte de Blissac returns for holiday festival where men drink, fight, and find love - or at least rewards from safebreaking."

Ian Wood says

Written at the height of his powers 'Hot Water' is Wodehouse's most ambitious farce and certainly his most successful. It is possibly one of the most overlooked of Wodehouse's farces due to it featuring none of his regular characters, although plenty of his regular types, and although is not unique in having a French location, it certainly is one of the few full novels to be entirely set in St Rocque, Wodehouse's fictional Monte Carlo.

That none of Wodehouse's regular characters appear is no doubt due to the fact that virtually everyone in the book is in fact an imposter and should they all be known to each other or the reader then the surprises that await the turning of the pages would be lost. The novel features Soup Slattery, Oily Carlisle and Gertie whom bear a similarity to Soap Molloy, Chimp Twist and Dolly the Dip who we have met in previous Wodehouse novels. Also featured are J. Wellington Gedge, Mrs Gedge, Senator Opal, his daughter Jane, Vicomte Blissac and Packy Franklyn and an assortment of domestic staff whom aren't as domestic as was traditional in the nineteen thirties.

In 'Hot Water' Wodehouse has raised his own standard and that of farce to be one of the highest rather than lowest of art forms. Wodehouse's most overlooked masterpiece, a timeless literary classic.

Michael G says

A jolly good read from dependable PGW...and so pleasing to know that there are many more where that came from...

Anthony Peter says

I came round to this at the end. I've discovered that the way to enjoy Wodehouse fully is to make sure you read good stretches of him at a sitting: the plots are so intricate that if you read just a few pages before drifting off at night, you are hopelessly stuck as to who was pretending to be whom when you next pick the book up.

Anyway, I think this was the most elaborately plotted piece of his I've read, and I'm not going to attempt any sort of summary. Suffice it to say that I wanted all the time to be watching the action unfold on stage. If there is a stage script out there somewhere, I'd be interested to know.

It was nice to see Soup Slattery and Gordon 'Oily' Carlisle popping up again - I can't remember where I encountered them before - 'Piccadilly Jim'? - and nice also to see the jumped up Mrs Gedge getting her come-uppance at the end in the nicest most semi-romantic way.

I liked also a couple of features of Wodehouse's style. There's the 'I'm not going to remind you, dear reader, of the plot that has gone before, but I will just make sure you know how things stand at the moment' technique. I like this: the plotting really is complicated and it's good to have a breather and be assured that you know what you thought you knew. The other is to cut back on those long periphrastic circumlocutions (and I know that's pleonastic, perhaps even tautological, but excuse my enthusiasm for the polysyllable) narratives you often get when a character is in a corner: 'The duty of a chronicler to his readers is to sift and select. Whatever of his material is not, in his opinion, of potential interest he must exclude. Out, therefore, in toto goes the story of what Senator Opal remembered in Washington...' This allows the reader another welcome breather as well as the author a chance to cut to the chase. And I like the authorial intrusion - a kind of knowing Chaucerian moment where the author cheekily invites the reader to admire his/her command of the storytelling. Several friends of mine loathe that, but I have to say I rather like it.

I also think Wodehouse can do sex very decently. I know he's not exactly a D.H. Lawrence in this respect, but he can in his restraint suggest something more than a silly young man and a silly young woman looking with foolishly googly eyes at each other. 'He eyed her mournfully. She was wearing a blue negligee, and in a blue negligee, as the records have shown, she looked charming. So charming, indeed, that something suddenly seemed to explode inside Packy like a bomb, and remorse was swept away on the tide of another emotion.' Well, it works for me.

Having been prepared to offer a grudging three stars to this rather jolly caper, I've tossed it an extra one. It holds back from five because I would - even though I enjoyed the plotting - have liked the story to be a little less complicated, frankly, and for there to have been something more in terms of characterization.

Peter Tillman says

Typical brilliant PGW romantic farce. Great stuff. Definite reread!

Simon says

Brilliant. As ever!
