



Summer Lightning

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The Honourable Galahad Threepwood has decided to write his memoir—a tell-all that could destroy polite society. Everyone wants this manuscript gone, particularly Lord Emsworth's neighbor Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe, who would do anything to keep the story of the prawns buried in the past. But the memoir isn't the only problem. A chorus girl disguised as an heiress, a double-dealing detective, a stolen prize-winning sow, and a crazy ex-secretary are only a few of the complications that must be dealt with before everyone can have their happy ending.

Summer Lightning Details

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From Reader Review Summer Lightning for online ebook

Vimal Thiagarajan says

I'm only as reliable as Lord Emsworth when it comes to judging which among Wodehouses's numbers is his best, but I believe this one is right up there among his finest. As if Lord Emsworth, Hon Galahad and the efficient Baxter weren't enough material, there were atleast a dozen other weapons of mass amusement that were thrown in for good measure, on the whole building up enough ammunition to take eons of pent up stress to the cleaners.

Dan Schwent says

Summer Lightning is one of Wodehouse's Blandings Castle series, a series which is slowly replacing Jeeves & Wooster in my affections.

Most of the stories in the Blandings Castle series use the same plot devices: a broken engagement (or two), an imposter (or two), and the kidnapping of Lord Emsworth's pig, the Empress of Blandings. Summer Lightning is no different. Wodehouse gets a lot of mileage out of the old formula but it never fails.

Hugo Carmody and Ronnie Fish both end up on the outs with their ladies. Uncle Galahad is at Blandings writing his memoirs. Lady Constance wants the terribly efficient Baxter back as Emsworth's secretary. When the Empress turns up missing, Percy Pilbeam ends up on the case.

If you like Wodehouse, you'll love Summer Lightning. If you don't, get your act together. You probably spend most of your time beating up old women or something.

booklady says

Although I can see why I don't usually partake of a steady diet of *any* genre much less author, there is something to be said for immersing oneself in a 'serious study' of comedy. For one thing it recognizes comedy as art and as such not to be viewed lightly, however much it entertains. For another, constant exposure to the medium has the effect of reducing one's susceptibility to the comic influence through immunity thus allowing for greater objectivity in viewing what has facilitated our mirth.

These are both important for me. I like and need to laugh, but have never given much thought to why or what makes me do so.

When our daughters where growing up, we watched the Jeeves and Wooster series with them repeatedly. They were family favorites despite being formulaic and predicable, made even more so through repetitive viewings.

Reading the actual Wodehouse books now, I see they are even better than the film series. Several audio versions I have listened to recently enhance the experience due to expert readers.

In *Summer Lightning*, Wodehouse really sizzles. All his characters crackle with the energy of a summer electric storm and there are plenty of interesting personalities for collectors of that sort: dotty old Lord

Elmsworth; devoted Sue Brown/sometimes of another alias; pimply Pilbeam; Reminiscences-writing Honorable Galahad Threepwood, or “Gally”; the Efficient Baxter; dying-for-a-dance Hugo Carmody and the infamous kidnapped Empress of Blandings—none other than a pig, to name a few.

Wodehouse disclaims writing about ‘real life’, preferring to poke fun at it—at us. I admit it—I can see myself in his stories. And really when you get right down to it, is there anything funnier than one’s own idiosyncrasies?

Scot Ryder says

The Blandings Castle books are often overshadowed by the more popular Jeeves and Wooster series, but deserve a visit in their own right. As is true of most Wodehouse, the zaniest of machinations fail, then succeed, true love wins in the end, and the aristocracy bumble their way through life saved only by the wisdom from the service class. Very enjoyable characters and strong writing throughout. Very, very funny.

Simona says

Cu personaje ?i intrigi dense ?i colorate, fir epic bogat ?i mult dialog, acest volum scris aproape în întregime în manier? dramaturgic? mi-a dat senza?ia, înc? de la prima pagin?, c? îl citesc pe Moliere. Lectur? u?oar? ?i amuzant?, ideal? pentru vacan??. De citit ?i celelalte volume din serie.

QNPoohBear says

Ronnie Fish wants to marry a beautiful chorus girl named Sue Brown, but he knows the family won't approve. He needs money from his trustee, Lord Emsworth, in order to marry Sue. All Lord Emsworth is concerned with is his prize pig, The Empress of Blandings. Ronnie gets the bright idea to steal the Empress and hide her away then find her. His uncle will be so grateful, he will give Ronnie a reward. Ronnie's friend Hugo Carmody wants to marry his cousin Millicent but the family wants Millicent to marry Ronnie. When the Empress disappears, Lord Emsworth dispatches a telegram to Pilbeam, a tabloid writer turned private detective. Hugo heads to London to consult with Pilbeam in person and meets with reject but accidentally sets in motion a chain of events that will have far reaching repercussions. Also involved in the tangle is Lord Emsworth's brother, Gallahad, an old reprobate who shocks everyone by announcing his intentions of publishing his memoirs. Gally's memoirs will dredge up old scandals that respectable people, like Emsworth's neighbor, Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe, would rather forget. Lord Emsworth's sister, Lady Constance, engages her brother's former secretary Baxter to steal the manuscript for her. Lord Emsworth is convinced "young Parsloe," his rival in the prize pig market, has stolen The Empress and he's determined to get his beloved pig back. Of course nothing is easy, not even true love.

This story takes awhile to get started. I didn't get into it until the middle of the story when all the characters are at Blandings. Three quarters of the way through it gets really really funny and I laughed out loud. The romances didn't turn out the way I had expected them to but by the time they were resolved I was rooting for the couples to be happy. I enjoyed it once it got started. The writing was very nice in parts and in other parts hysterically funny.

My favorite characters are Lord Emsworth and Baxter. I love the interactions between the two of them. Lord

Emsworth is such a fool and Baxter is a good foil for him. Emsworth manages to make Baxter appear the fool instead and everything goes crazy whenever Baxter is around. I also liked Emsworth's dedication to his pig. Uncle Gally is another great character. His reminiscences get a little long winded and boring after awhile. I find it hard to believe that he would have such a great memory, but he sure is funny. Beach isn't so funny in this book but he does provide some amusing moments. He seems like a stereotypical butler but he owes his allegiance to himself and his mother though he does value his position. He makes a stupid decision in the beginning that I didn't think was a good one and it caused him a lot of trouble. His numerous health issues seem to have disappeared miraculously.

His young nephews are not very likeable characters. I liked Hugh better than Ronnie. Hugh is sort of a Georgette Heyer beta hero like Freddy in Georgette Heyer's *Cotillion*. He's likeable because he's clueless. However, I didn't like that he was eager to accept a scheme that wasn't very honorable in order to get his uncle to come around. Ronnie is not very likeable. His jealous tantrum really turned me off. He went way overboard in losing his temper and if he really loved Sue, he wouldn't have done that.

The female love interests are slightly better. I liked Sue best because she is nice and seems smart. She's too nice for Ronnie and too smart for Hugo. She deserves better. She almost always keeps her calm. I like that she took initiative to get what she wanted in the beginning but I didn't like the way she did it. I didn't like Millicent. She got very silly and annoying quickly. I didn't feel sorry for her at all. I found her constant weeping tiresome.

Lady Constance and Pilbeam round out the main secondary characters. Lady Constance is a stereotypical Grande Dame who wants things done a certain way and will do anything to protect the family reputation and name. She's meddling and rude. She doesn't have a large role in this book and certainly can't compare to Maggie Smith's Dowager Countess of Grantham and if anyone could write a character like that, it was P.G. Wodehouse. Pilbeam is a nasty fellow and I didn't like him one bit. His story fell really flat at the end. I was hoping for more because he deserved his plot to be tied up nicely.

Downton Abbey fans will probably like this book because of the country house setting and some similar plots and character types.

Ian Wood says

'Summer Lightning' is the third novel in the Blanding's saga and the first in which the residents of Blanding's themselves take centre stage. In 'Something Fresh' Blanding's was a standard Wodehouse setting for a typical Wodehouse farce and in 'Leave it to Psmith' the family and staff were acting as supporting roles for Psmith to bring home his typical 'vim and vigour'. After writing 'Leave it to Psmith' Wodehouse had written a series of magazine stories based on the Threepwood family which had clearly given him the confidence to use them as the major players in a novel.

In his preface to the book Wodehouse takes the criticism of his previous novel 'Money for Nothing' that it contained 'all the old Wodehouse characters under different names' with typical good humour, writing 'He has probably now been eaten by bears, like the children who made mock of the prophet Elisha: but if he still survives he will not be able to make a similar charge against Summer Lightning. With my superior intelligence, I have outgeneralled the man this time by putting in all the old Wodehouse characters under the same names. Pretty silly it will make him feel, I rather fancy.'

True to his word, as well as the residents of Blanding's, Wodehouse also serves us up, Pilbeam from 'Bill the

Conqueror' and Hugo Carmody and Ronnie Fish from 'Money for Nothing'. In fact Ronnie Fish referring to his personal stock with the Family as 'Fish Preferred' gave rise to the title the book was published under in America. The plot is, of course, as familiar as the cast. Hugo is in love with Millicent Threepwood but the family want her to wed Ronnie but he is in love with Sue Brown of the London chorus and attending Blandings's as one of many imposters. Galahad Threepwood endeavours to bring all these matters to a suitable conclusion whilst the efficient Baxter and Pilbeam try to obtain the manuscript of his memoirs to stop them from being published and embarrassing the neighbours and notably Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe.

Galahad brings about a typical Wodehouse solution which will not impress any professional critic but can only impress anyone reading the book for enjoyment or entertainment.

Greg Brozeit says

I needed a diversion for a couple of days from the national tragedy that is unfolding before our eyes and figured some Wodehouse would help.

Sir Galahad Threepwood is writing his Reminiscences, much to the horror of his sister, Lady Constance Keeble. As she tells her "strangely sinister" sycophant Rupert Baxter, the former hated private secretary to her pig obsessed brother Clarence, Lord Emsworth, she must get her hands on Gally's manuscript because it "is full from beginning to end of libelous anecdotes, Mr. Baxter. About all our best friends. If it is published we shall not have a friend left. Galahad seems to have known everybody in England when they were young and foolish, and to remember everything particularly foolish and disgraceful that they ever did."

Will Galahad's nephew, the obsessively jealous Ronnie Fish, be able to hide Sue Brown's past as a laid off chorus girl and the fact that her mother was once the rage of London's cabaret nightlife? Will Ronnie be able to convince Clarence to give him some of his trust fund to afford marriage? Will his best friend and partner in a recently failed London nightclub, Hugo Carmody, succeed in his new role as Clarence's assistant and successfully woo Millicent Threepwood, Clarence's niece, even as Constance strongly disapproves?

When Clarence's prized pig the Empress of Blandings goes missing, his rival for the title of Shropshire's Agricultural Show fattest pig competition, Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe, seems the most obvious suspect. Sir Gregory also fears the consequences that will come with the publication of Galahad's book. He enlists the slimy private detective, Percy Pilbeam, who has an infatuation with Sue Brown, to steal it for him. Pilbeam will investigate the missing pig as a ruse to join the human menagerie clustered at Blandings Castle. In the meantime, the odious Baxter schemes to get his hands on the manuscript and get his job back, despite Clarence's objections, through Lady Constance's patronage. How will the tensions about love, a pig, a book, and the turmoil they create be solved?

For those uninitiated to P.G. Wodehouse's universe, he may well be the greatest comedic writer in the English language. The prose of *Summer Lightning* is at its sharpest and the laughs never relent. Although there were a few books at the time of its publication with the same title, this one fulfills Wodehouse's "modest hope that this story will be considered worthy of inclusion in the list of the Hundred Best Books Called Summer Lightning." It certainly is.

With all the horrendous noise coming out of Washington these days, I have a feeling I'll be revisiting Wodehouse a few more times this year. Escapism may never have been as therapeutic as it is now.

Eddie Watkins says

If you've forgotten (or sadly have never known) what it's like to read something smartly light and funny and delightful give this little piggie a go.

Deedee374 says

it always used to annoy me when people would talk about Jeeves and Wodehouse and how witty they were, and it just sounded soooo pretentious and Anglophile and all. But then I heard an audiotape of one of the Jeeves books (Jonathan Cecil is the best), and I became one of those people because Wodehouse is just hilariously, deliriously funny in a kind of screwball way that never feels icky & isn't precious at all.

I love "Summer Lightning" for its amazing characters, including The Empress of Blandings--who is, of course, a pig.

Anne says

So much love for Wodehouse! I've actually only ever read one Wodehouse book, and it was a Jeeves and Wooster. I much preferred this one, actually, probably because it was not so much isolated episodes as it was a real novel. The characters are, of course, completely stereotypical, especially Lady Constance and Lord Emsworth, but when written in Wodehouse style, they become completely fresh and hilarious again. And I'll say it again--enormous pigs called the Empress of Blandings are always, always funny.

Siddharth says

My first *Blandings* novel after a long time, and apart from the rather obvious fact that it is a snorter, corker and a capital, capital, capital good egg of a book, what really struck me is the lyrical beauty that Wodehouse regularly manages to conjure up.

For Example, this is how the book begins:

Blandings Castle slept in the sunshine. Dancing little ripples of heat-mist played across its smooth lawns and stone-flagged terraces. The air was full of the lulling drone of insects. It was that gracious hour of a summer afternoon, midway between luncheon and tea, when nature seems to unbutton its waistcoat and put its feet up.

I mean, just picture that, will you?

And for those who have yet to sample Wodehousian fare, here's an extract from the book's preface:
A certain critic -- for such men, I regret to say, do exist -- made the nasty remark about my last novel that it contained 'all the old Wodehouse characters under different names.' He has probably by now been eaten by bears, like the children who made mock of the prophet Elisha: but if he still survives he will not be able to make a similar charge against Summer Lightning. With my superior intelligence, I have out-generalled the man this time by putting in all the old Wodehouse characters under the same names. Pretty silly it will make him feel, I rather fancy.

Plum!

Maureen says

goodreads tells me i've now read seventeen wodehouse books, with sixteen of those being novels and short stories -- the other is a wonderful collection i can only highly recommend, called Wodehouse On Wodehouse that is part memoir of his time writing for musical theatre, and partly selected letters, and also part sort-of autobiography. so it should be obvious that i love a good wodehouse novel. but i'm coming to terms that i have certain favourites and that wodehouse has a cast of archetypes for his fiction, and depending on which set you read first, you might take on a preference. i definitely have: it's jeeves and wooster that i love best though there are individual stories with many of the characters, the drones, mr. mulliner, uncle fred in particular, that i also adore. i've thought about wodehouse characters, trying to slot them into the various archetypes he uses and trying to determine the overlap and traits, and from them, my own predilections.

wodehouse has a template and it's a mistake to focus on it: his comic archetypes and his classical structure serves its purpose as a springboard for wodehouse's pen, dripping with outrageously clever language, and dialogue, his remarkable facility with them might remind us again of that highly successful career in musical theatre, mostly writing the lyrics to guy bolton's book. they collaborated in a fruitful partnership of hits with composer jerome kern. above all, he has a truly genius comedic wit...and sometimes it hits one harder than others, in some books more so than others. wodehouse fans all have their favourites. and so, i must make it clear that while i'm invariably in wodehouse's corner, he's at a disadvantage here with me because i'm not with jeeves and wooster.

in this novel, summer lightning, we are at blandings castle, with clarence, lord emsworth who is a fine an old mad lord as one could ever wish for, pig-happy and free of all cares except those that are visited on him by his fussy family. his nephew, ronnie fish (son to his sister, julia) stirs up trouble by wanting to marry a showgirl. lord emsworth is largely unaware of this for the most part while they, and the rest of his satellites (his bossy sisters, his brother, a jeeves-like sage aptly named galahad who is writing infamous memoirs, his scheming secretaries (former and current), his butler, his daughter, the much maligned neighbour/slash pig competition competitor all conspire around him. shenanigans ensue, and they are funny but a little... long for me. and then to find the action continued in the follow-up summer lightning, which further extends the story of the romance of ronnie and his show girl sue, and also resolving the other major plotline revolving around the memoirs that galahad's been writing that -- dash it all -- might tarnish the reputations of several members of the british aristocracy who also serve as family friends and acquaintances. again. the same story in essentials. and in short, too long. i may have perhaps liked them better had i not read them back-to-back. but they do feel like one really, really long novel to me. and perhaps it's just not as absurd as i like my wodehouse. certainly, i know i seem contradictory: i *just* said one had to go with the structure but there's too much of it, and just not enough i find funny here or enough wodehouse flourish to make me forget.

and beyond that, i miss jeeve's ability to bring order to the chaos, and i miss bertie's ability to bungle it so jeeves has to do it all over again -- as they did in a similarly-themed (young lovers, scandalous memoirs) short story called "jeeves takes charge" that introduced the two characters, which i read, incidentally, on first delving into wodehouse books in earnest.. preference established. it's never out-and-out boring and a middling wodehouse is still better than many. this one just isn't a favourite.

Emma Rose Ribbons says

Absolutely wonderful. It's my first Wodehouse novel since I finished the Jeeves books and it didn't disappoint, it's just as hilarious and lovely. I very much enjoyed the language in this, as well as the characters (going so far as growing very fond of a pig). Great stuff, I'm so happy I finally stepped into Blandings!

Leslie says

2.5 stars for this audiobook edition (review below); 4 stars for the book itself.

I was disappointed that I couldn't find a Jonathan Cecil narration of this second book in the Blandings series (GR includes the Psmith books in the Blandings series but I prefer the "Fantastic Fiction" organization of Wodehouse's books). John Wells was truly terrible in his choice of voices for these characters, making Lord Emsworth sound like a petulant teenaged girl, his niece Millicent talk with a lisp, and other sundry affronts to my ear. If this had been my first experience with Blandings, I would never have read another... Luckily, after getting over my shock, I found that I could mostly ignore most of that and get lost in the wonderful silliness of a Wodehouse plot.

david says

For less than the price of a cup of English tea:

Each book that PG writes, proffers hours and hours of delightful entertainment.

This accomplished and sophisticated writer always delivers.

Highbrow, erudite comedic writing is difficult to summit even once.

And yet, Mr. Wodehouse is a singular Sherpa in this vocation.

A tip of my 'bowler' to you, again, sir.

Sookie says

Perfect book for lazy Sundays, warm afternoon and, lots and lots of tea.

Light, funny, tongue in cheek, witty and absolutely hilarious.

Elisabeth says

It was going to be a three-star, but after those last few chapters, with Lord Emsworth brandishing a gun, Baxter under the bed and people generally sprinting in all directions through the halls of Blandings, I had to tack on the fourth. :)

Maria Roxana says

Ideal? pentru vacan??.

Antonomasia says

Even more like *A Midsummer Night's Dream* fortified with extra McGuffins than all the other Wodehouses I've read so far. Would not be surprised if that was the intention here.

It seems my enjoyment of the Blandings stories is partly dependent on the characters of the [usually young] people staying at the house and causing havoc. Something Fresh remains my favourite of the novels so far because I liked Ashe and Joan so much - nor was anyone else notably objectionable. Ronald Overbury Fish, however, is an utter arse. (Given his name, I was rather tempted to use the other word, making a bad-taste pun that one is really not supposed to - but it would be rather out of keeping with Wodehouse, never mind potentially attract irate commenters for no worthwhile reason. Besides, in the peculiar unspoken gradations of meaning attached to swearwords, I'm not sure it quite suits him.) But yes, Ronnie Fish has no notable redeeming qualities, is lazy, violent, dishonest, unattractive, and above all has a serious jealousy problem that meant I was sincerely hoping he did not get married in the end. (I thought this was probably irredeemable in 1929, when Freud hadn't so much as arrived in London yet, and a world in which young men usually possessed of a *crust of calm detachment from all human emotion, built up by years of Eton and Cambridge* would even consider therapy was many decades away.) His ex-girlfriend travels hundreds of miles to his house, uninvited, after being dumped, whilst pretending to be someone else - which is really not on either, but otherwise she basically is a likeable and civilised individual, if deluded in wanting to marry this awful man, whose relatives have the decency to warn her. His cousin Millicent is worryingly jealous too, but I found her likeable otherwise (it was her reading Schopenhauer whilst broken-hearted that sealed it) and at least she displays no inclination to fly off the handle and punch people.

I am relieved to see that Ronnie does not appear in many other books. In the second half he was mostly off-screen which made the rest more enjoyable, with a return of the feelings of warmth and cosiness and good humour that are the point of these books. Still, I was increasingly dismayed by the misunderstanding and mistrust heaped on poor Baxter. (I suspect, that rather like my tendency to feel sorry for Basil Fawlty and hope he would win occasionally, one isn't supposed to feel this way...) Regardless, I do have some strange affection for the rest of the regulars, in whom attributes that would surely be trying in person somehow become loveable eccentricities on the page, and the idyllic setting is undoubtedly a character in itself. I would love a Blandings autumn or winter though; Wodehouse clearly loved his endless summers, but having got through several in succession, as a fan of the colder, darkening months (perhaps such people did not exist in draughty castles of the pre-central heating era) I am starting to find these summers like my equivalent of the Narnian winter...
