Scene 2

(Late afternoon. STELLA is enthralled by CRUMPET [a.k.a. ALFRED]. BERTIE hovers, scowling, very much a third wheel.)

CRUMPET. So there I was, down to my last bullet, face-to-face with a man-eating lion. You see, my dear, the critical thing to remember in a situation like that is never to show fear. So I lit a cigarette, blew a cloud, and saluted the King of the Jungle. We both knew, somehow, that there would be only one survivor. Then the magnificent beast tensed its muscles... it began to charge... I lifted my gun, and... BANG!

(STELLA jumps and gives a little squeal. BERTIE is seething.)

STELLA. What a thrilling life you have led, Mr. Crumpworth!

CRUMPET. Suppose I have, knocking about the world as I have, one hair-raising death-defying peril after another. But see here, none of this "Mr. Crumpworth" business. Do call me Alfred. Or, if you like, Alfie.

STELLA. And you must call me Stella and we'll pretend we've known each other for ages. Oh, how I envy your exploits, Alfie! Each day a life-and-death struggle against the savage jungle.

CRUMPET. And yet, 'tis a rather lonely life.

BERTIE. Oh, for pity's—

STELLA. In that case, you must stay on in Monte Carlo for a good long time. Mustn't he, Bertie?

BERTIE. I expect it will seem like a good long time.

CRUMPET. By Jove, this view is something like, eh?

BERTIE. Something like what?

CRUMPET. Well—

BERTIE. Like your childhood memories of darkest Africa, perhaps?

CRUMPET. (Netted:) As a matter of fact, yes.

BERTIE. Utter rot.

CRUMPET. (Outraged:) What, sir?

BERTIE. Pifflie, sir!

CRUMPET. 'Tis not!

BERTIE. 'Tis!

STELLA. Boys!

CRUMPET. What I was going to say, was that looking out over the bay in this fashion reminds me of the view from the shore of Lake
Victoria, with the sun shimmering on the water and the great birds wheeling above.

BERTIE. Do enlighten us. What sort of birds does one observe above Lake Victoria? Precisely?

CRUMPET. (Through his teeth:) African birds. But I fear I've been boring on about my adventures far too long.

STELLA. Of course you haven't. Your stories are spellbinding. We're simply longing to hear more, aren't we, Bertie?

BERTIE. No.

STELLA. Don't pay the slightest attention to Bertie. I never do. Alfie, dear, I wonder, would you be so kind as to fetch my wrap? It's a bit nippy with this breeze.

BERTIE. I'll go. All this fresh air is getting into my lungs.

STELLA. No Bertie, I want a word with you. Alfie will go, won't you? Please? It's in my stateroom, right through that door, down the stairs, third door on the left.

CRUMPET. I should be delighted to be of service.

STELLA. Aren't you a pet!

CRUMPET. (Warmly) Lady Stella. (Coldly) Wooster.

(CRUMPET bows and exits.)

STELLA. (To CRUMPET:) Toodles! (Rounding on BERTIE:) What's the matter with you? You're being horrid to poor Alfie.

BERTIE. Poor Alfie! What an insufferable gasbag, going on and on about his African adventures.

STELLA. Personally, I think he's awfully dashing.

BERTIE. That presumptuous pill?

STELLA. I believe you're jealous.

BERTIE. What I am, Stella, is ... wounded. It is clear to me now that you are a butterfly who toys with men's hearts, and throws them aside like soiled gloves.

STELLA. ... Do butterflies do that?

BERTIE. You know what I mean!

STELLA. Bertie, darling, you're being absurd. I'm just amusing myself with Alfie. You know I adore you.

BERTIE. I don't know any such—you do?

STELLA. Of course I do. In fact, I've pretty well made up my mind to say "yes."

BERTIE. Darling!

STELLA. There's just one teensy little obstacle to overcome.

BERTIE. Uh-oh.

STELLA. Daddy.

BERTIE. He detests me?

STELLA. No! Well, yes. But that's not the difficulty. You see, Daddy has his heart absolutely set on me marrying a duke. Or, at the very least, an earl. And you ...

BERTIE. Am a mere "mister." But that's utterly—

STELLA. Feudal? It is. But that's Daddy. Plus, of course, he despises you personally. But I have a plan.

BERTIE. A plan to make me a duke?

STELLA. No, darling. A plan that requires you to charm Miss Pibleam.

BERTIE. Wouldn't it be easier to make me a duke?

(STELLA enters with a tray containing a telegram.)

JEEVES. Pardon the intrusion.

STELLA. Yes, Jeeves. What is it?

JEEVES. Telegram for you, Lady Stella.

(STELLA reads her message.)

BERTIE. (Confidentially:) Jeeves, you may congratulate me!

JEEVES. Sir?

BERTIE. Stella is teetering on the verge of saying "yes," just as soon as we get past one trivial, insurmountable little hitch.

JEEVES. Very best wishes, sir.

STELLA. (Sighing:) Oh, poor Daddy.

BERTIE. Something wrong?

STELLA. He's been detained in Paris. Still, that gives us time to put my plan into action.

BERTIE. Yes, about this plan—

STELLA. Jeeves, I wonder if you would advise us?

JEEVES. Certainly, if I can, Lady Stella.