(During the following exchange CRUMPET and BERTIE whack away dutifully, if rather ineptly, with their parasols.)

STELLA. I expect the count has fought heaps of duels.
BERTIE. Heaps?
STELLA. When I was quite young, I used to dream about two gallant gentlemen dueling over a lady fair.
BERTIE. Grisly sort of dream.
STELLA. Of course, in my dreams the lady fair was me, not Miss Pilbeam.
CRUMPET. Yes, that struck me as a bit odd.
BERTIE. I'd like to strike you right in the—
CRUMPET. I had no notion you were carrying a torch for Miss Pilbeam.
BERTIE. What?!

(BERTIE straightens indignantly.)

STELLA. Knees, Bertie!

(BERTIE squats.)

CRUMPET. You and Pilbeam. Quite a shocker, that.
BERTIE. Are you barmy?!

(BERTIE straightens.)

STELLA. Knees!

(BERTIE squats.)

CRUMPET. But then, I suppose I’m a romantic.

(During the following, BERTIE seizes one end of CRUMPET’s parasol and won’t let go. CRUMPET retaliates by seizing the end of BERTIE’s parasol. They tug back and forth to no avail.)

BERTIE. What you are is a congenital idiot who ought to have a nurse to lead you by the hand and a muscular attendant to kick you regularly every quarter hour.
CRUMPET. Indeed? I have half a mind—
BERTIE. At best!
CRUMPET. —not to act as your second!

(BERTIE and CRUMPET pull apart.)
BERTIE. My what?
STELLA. That's right. I must say, Bertie, you're awfully brave in the face of death.

BERTIE. Well, we Woosters are known for—"face of death"?

STELLA. (Back to her book:) Another task performed by your second is to make every effort to persuade both parties to settle things without violence.

BERTIE. Splendid notion! (To CRUMPET:) Run off straight away and persuade that blasted count to call off the whole affair.

CRUMPET. But Bertie, from what I hear, the count caught you red-handed attempting to ravish Miss Pilbeam.

BERTIE. I— What— Stella!

STELLA. I must say, Bertie, I never dreamed that a savage beast simmered beneath that foolish facade.

BERTIE. Stella, darling, I am "this" close to clipping you one on the earhole.

STELLA. (Thrilled:) Ooh! Aren't you a big, bad brute!

CRUMPET. He is not!

BERTIE. Much you know! It is not often that Bertram Wilberforce Wooster permits his angry passions to rise, but when he does, strong men climb trees and pull them up after them.

(A short pause, then CRUMPET and STELLA burst into laughter.)

CRUMPET. Wait till the count has you at sword point. We'll see who's the savage and who's the sniveler.

(BERTIE's leg strategically gives way, leaving him decidedly lopsided.)

BERTIE. Pity that this old wound of mine has been acting up a trifle. But don't give that a thought.

CRUMPET. What wound?

BERTIE. Cricket injury.

CRUMPET. When?

BERTIE. School.

CRUMPET. I don't re—

BERTIE. Well, you wouldn't, since you were in Africa.

CRUMPET. I was n— Yes, I was!

STELLA. It says here that if, for any reason, Bertie were unable to meet the count, then his second, that's you, Alfie, would take his place.

BERTIE. There's a thought.

CRUMPET. Where's a thought?

BERTIE. You wouldn't know a thought if it struck you broadside.

STELLA. Bertie, you don't fear meeting the count, do you?

BERTIE. Well—

STELLA. Didn't you tell me the chaps at school used to call you "Daredevil Bertie"?

BERTIE. Did I?

STELLA. What's happened to your derring-do?

CRUMPET. Lost his nerve. It's the alcohol, I expect.

BERTIE. See here, I've nerve enough for anything!

STELLA. Marvelous! That's settled. I'm going below to change for dinner.

BERTIE. Allow me to escort you.

STELLA. Hadn't you better get in some more practice? Cocktails come before dinner, you know.

BERTIE. Of course I— Oh.

(CRUMPET takes STELLA's arm to escort her below.)

CRUMPET. I say, Stella, do you suppose my twin would mind if I borrowed a dinner jacket?

(PILBEAM enters breathlessly.)

PILBEAM. Oh, Mr. Wooster! Might I beg a word?

BERTIE. (Sternly:) I have one or two choice words to say to you, Miss Pilbeam!

(STELLA breaks away from CRUMPET.)

STELLA. (An urgent whisper:) Careful! You've got to get on her good side. Remember Daddy!

BERTIE. But, she—

CRUMPET. (To STELLA:) I say, hadn't we better leave these two lovebirds alone?

BERTIE. No!