

SIDE

Act One (pg. 1- pg. 2) Algernon and Lane

Morning-room in Algernon's flat in Half-Moon Street. The room is luxuriously and artistically furnished. The sound of an electric guitar is heard offstage.

[Lane is arranging afternoon tea on the table, and after the music has ceased, Algernon enters.]

Algernon. Did you hear what I was playing, Lane?

Lane. I didn't think it polite to listen, sir.

Algernon. I'm sorry for that, for your sake. I don't play accurately- anyone can play accurately- but I play with wonderful expression.

Lane. Yes, sir.

Algernon. *[Picks up a newspaper.]* Have you heard the news, Lane?

Lane. No sir.

Algernon. There's a new play at the Savoy, complete with "boys of chorus."
[Raises an eyebrow.]

Lane. Sir?

Algernon. *[Reads paper.]* It says here that the choristers appear to be enjoying themselves onstage. How preposterous! *[Chortles, can't believe it.]*

Lane. Unthinkable sir.

Algernon. The theatre is a very serious place, Lane. Especially when the play is a comedy.

Lane. Yes, sir.

Algernon. *[Reading.]* It seems that one of the choristers was shot as he exited the stage last night. Not much wonder, considering the reviews.

Lane. I see. *[Disturbed.]* Did it mention the name of the man shot?

Algernon. *[Dismissively.]* No one I've heard of. Have you got the cucumber sandwiches cut for Lady Bracknell?

Lane. Yes, sir. *[Hands them on a salver. Picks up the paper, reads.]*

Algernon. *[Inspects them, takes two, and sits down on the sofa.]* Oh! by the way Lane, I see from your book that on Thursday night, when Mr. Worthing was dining with me, eight bottles of champagne are entered as having been consumed.

Lane. Yes, sir; eight bottles and a pint.

Algernon. Why is it that in a bachelor's home the servants invariably drink the champagne? I merely ask for information.

Lane. I attribute it to the superior quality of the wine, sir. I have often observed that in married households the champagne is rarely of a first-rate brand.

Algernon. Good Heavens! Is marriage so demoralizing as that?

Lane. I wouldn't know, sir. I've only been married once, and that was in consequence of a misunderstanding between myself and a young person.

Algernon. I don't know that I am much interested in your family life, Lane. [*Said as though about personal hygiene or intimate details.*]

Lane. No sir; it is not a very interesting subject. I never think of it myself.

Algernon. Very natural, I am sure. That will **do**, Lane, thank you.

[*The sound of an electric bell is heard.*]

Lane. Thank you, sir. [*Lane goes out.*]