

## **SIDE 1**

### ***Act 1 (pg. 11-pg. 13) Gwendolen and Jack***

**Jack.** Charming day it has been, Miss Fairfax.

**Gwendolen.** Pray don't talk to me about the weather, Mr. Worthing. Whenever people talk to me about the weather, I always feel quite certain that they mean something else. And that makes me so nervous.

**Jack.** I *do* mean something else.

**Gwendolen.** I thought so.

**Jack.** And I would like to be allowed to take advantage of Lady Bracknell's temporary absence...

**Gwendolen.** I would certainly advise you to do so. Mamma has a way of coming back suddenly into a room that I have often had to speak to her about.

**Jack.** [*Nervously.*] Miss Fairfax, ever since I met you, I have admired you more than any girl...I have ever met since...I met you.

**Gwendolen.** Yes, I am quite aware of the fact. And I often wish that in public, at any rate, you had been more demonstrative. My ideal has always been to love someone named Ernest. There is something in that name that inspires absolute confidence. The moment Algernon first mentioned to me that he had a friend called Ernest, I knew I was destined to love you.

**Jack.** You really love me, Gwendolen?

**Gwendolen.** Passionately!

**Jack.** Darling! You don't know how happy you've made me.

**Gwendolen.** My own Ernest! [*They go in for a kiss, then Jack stops.*]

**Jack.** But you don't mean to say that you couldn't love me if my name **wasn't** Ernest?

**Gwendolen.** But your name **is** Ernest.

**Jack.** Yes, I know it is. But what if it was something else? Do you mean to say you couldn't love me then?

**Gwendolen.** Well...*[Wrinkles her nose]*

**Jack.** Personally, darling, to speak quite candidly, I don't much care about the name of Ernest. I don't think the name suits me at all.

**Gwendolen.** It suits you perfectly. It is a divine name. It has a music of its own. It produces vibrations.

**Jack.** Well, really, Gwendolen, I must say that I think there are lots of other much nicer names. I think Jack, for instance, a charming name.

**Gwendolen.** Jack? . . . No, there is very little music in the name Jack, if any at all, indeed. It does not thrill. It produces absolutely no vibrations . . . I have known several Jacks, and they all, without exception, were more than usually plain. The only really safe name is Ernest.

**Jack.** Gwendolen, I must get christened at once - I mean we must get married at once.

## **SIDE 2**

### ***Act 2 (pg. 29 - pg. 31) Cecily and Gwendolen***

**Cecily.** [*Advancing to meet her.*] Pray let me introduce myself to you. My name is Cecily Cardew.

**Gwendolen.** Cecily Cardew? [*Moving to her and shaking hands.*] What a very sweet name! Something tells me that we are going to be great friends. I like you already more than I can say. My first impressions of people are never wrong.

**Cecily.** How nice of you to like me so much after we have known each other such a comparatively short time. Pray sit down.

**Gwendolen.** [*Still standing up.*] I may call you Cecily, may I not?

**Cecily.** With pleasure!

**Gwendolen.** And you will always call me Gwendolen, won't you?

**Cecily.** If you wish.

**Gwendolen.** Then that is all quite settled, is it not?

**Cecily.** I hope so. Pray sit down.

*(They both sit down together.)*

*[Merriman brings in tea, coffee, cake and bread, then stands by]*

**Gwendolen.** You are here on a short visit, I suppose.

**Cecily.** Oh no! I live here.

**Gwendolen.** [*Severely.*] Really?

**Cecily.** My dear guardian has the difficult task of looking after me.

**Gwendolen.** Your guardian?

**Cecily.** Yes, I am Mr. Worthing's ward.

**Gwendolen.** Oh! It is strange that Ernest never mentioned to me that he had a ward. How secretive of him! He grows more interesting hourly. I am not sure, however, that the news inspires me with feelings of unmixed delight. [*Rising and going to her.*] I am very fond of you, Cecily; I have liked you ever since I met you!

But I am bound to state that now that I know that you are Mr. Worthing's ward, I cannot help expressing a wish you were—well, just a little older than you seem to be—and not quite so very alluring in appearance. In fact, if I may speak candidly —

**Cecily.** Pray do! I think that whenever one has anything unpleasant to say, one should always be quite candid.

**Gwendolen.** Well, to speak with perfect candour, Cecily, I wish that you were fully forty-two, and more than usually plain for your age. Ernest has a strong upright nature. He is the very soul of truth and honour. Disloyalty would be as impossible to him as deception.

**Cecily.** I beg your pardon, Gwendolen, did you say Ernest?

**Gwendolen.** Yes.

**Cecily.** Oh, but it is not Mr. **Ernest** Worthing who is my guardian. It is his brother—his elder brother.

**Gwendolen.** Of course you are quite, quite sure that it is not Mr. **Ernest** Worthing who is your guardian?

**Cecily.** Quite sure. [*A pause.*] In fact, I am going to be Ernest's wife.

**Gwendolen.** I beg your pardon?

**Cecily.** [*Rather shy and confidingly.*] Mr. Ernest Worthing and I are engaged to be married.

**Gwendolen.** [*Quite politely, rising.*] My darling Cecily, I think there must be some slight error. Mr. Ernest Worthing is engaged to me.

**Cecily.** [*Very politely, rising.*] I am afraid you must be under some misconception. Ernest proposed to me exactly ten minutes ago. [*Shows diary.*]

**Gwendolen.** [*Examines diary carefully.*] It is certainly very curious, for he asked me to be his wife yesterday afternoon at 5:30. If you would care to verify the incident, pray do so. [*Produces diary of her own.*] I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read in the train. I am so sorry, dear Cecily, if it is any disappointment to you, but I am afraid I have the prior claim.

**Cecily.** It would distress me more than I can tell you, dear Gwendolen, if it caused you any mental or physical anguish, but I feel bound to point out that since Ernest proposed to you, he clearly has changed his mind.