

SIDE 4

ALGY/CECILY

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CECILY [*rising, moving C*]. Uncle Jack would be very much annoyed if he knew you were staying on till next week at the same hour.

ALGY. Oh, I don't care about Jack. [*Crosses quickly to her.*] I don't care for anybody in the whole world but you. I love you, Cecily. You will marry me, won't you? [*Takes her hand.*]

CECILY [*blandly*]. You silly boy! [*Pats his cheek.*] Of course.

Why, we have been engaged for the last three months.

ALGY [*bewildered*]. For the last three months?

CECILY. Yes. [*Moving L C.*] It will be exactly three months on Thursday.

ALGY [*sitting weakly on settee.*] But how did we become engaged?

CECILY. Well—[*Comes back and sits beside him.*]—ever since dear Uncle Jack first confessed to us that he had a younger brother who was very wicked and bad, you, of course, have formed the chief topic of conversation between myself and Miss Prism. And, of course, a man who is much talked about is always very attractive. One feels there must be something in him after all. I daresay it was foolish of me, but I fell in love with you, Ernest.

ALGY [*embracing her*]. Darling! And when was the engagement actually settled?

CECILY. On the fourteenth of June last. Worn out by your entire ignorance of my existence, I determined to end the matter one way or the other, and after a long struggle with myself, I accepted you here. The next day I bought this little ring in your name—[*Holds up hand to show ring.*]—and this is the bangle with the true lover's knot I promised you always to wear.

ALGY [*taking her hand*]. Did I give you this? It's very pretty, isn't it?

CECILY [*rising, crossing R C*]. Yes, you've wonderfully good taste, Ernest. It's the excuse I've always given for your leading such a bad life. And this is the box in which I keep

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all your dear letters. [*Kneels at chair left of table, opens box and produces letters tied with blue ribbon.*]

ALGY. My letters! [*Rises.*] But, my own sweet Cecily, I have never written—you any letters.

CECILY [*turning to him*]. You need hardly remind me of that, Ernest. I remember only too well that I was forced to write your letters for you. I wrote always three times a week, and sometimes oftener.

ALGY [*moving to her*]. Oh, do let me read them, Cecily!

CECILY [*sitting left of table*]. Oh, I couldn't possibly. They would make you far too conceited. [*Replaces letters in box.*]

ALGY [*kneeling beside her*]. What a perfect angel you are, Cecily!

CECILY. You dear, romantic boy! [*He pulls her face close to him and kisses her. She puts her fingers through his hair.*]

I hope your hair curls naturally. Does it?

ALGY. Yes, darling, with a little help from others.

CECILY. I am so glad!

ALGY. You'll never break off our engagement, Cecily?

CECILY. I don't think I could break it off, now that I have actually met you. Besides, of course, there is the question of your name.

ALGY [*nervously*]. Yes, of course.

CECILY. You must not laugh at me, darling, but it had always been a girlish dream of mine to love someone whose name was Ernest. [*Both rise and move C.*] There is something in that name that seems to inspire absolute confidence. I pity any poor married woman whose husband is not called Ernest.

ALGY. But, my dear child, do you mean to say you could not love me if I had some other name?

CECILY. But what name?

ALGY. Oh, any name you like—Algernon, for instance—

CECILY [*distastefully*]. But I don't like the name of Algernon. [*Crosses L C. ALGY follows.*]

ALGY. Well, I really can't see why you should object to the name of Algernon. It is not at all a bad name. In fact, it

is rather an aristocratic name. But seriously, Cecily, if my name *was* Algy, couldn't you love me?

CECILY. I might *respect* you, Ernest. I might *admire* your *character*, but I fear I would not be able to give you my undivided attention.

ALGY [*glancing L.*] Cecily! Your rector here is, I suppose, thoroughly experienced in the practice of all the rites and ceremonials of the church?

CECILY. Oh, yes. Dr. Chasuble is a most learned man. He has never written a single book, so you can imagine how much he knows.

ALGY. I must see him at once on a matter of important christening—I mean business. [*Crosses L.*] I'll be back in half an hour. [*Comes back, kisses her and dashes out L.*]

CECILY [*rapturously, looking after him*]. What an impetuous boy he is! [*Moves C.*] I like his hair so much. I must enter his proposal in my diary. [*Goes quickly R C, sits left of table and starts to write in diary.*]

[*MERRIMAN enters R.*]

MERRIMAN. A Miss Fairfax has just called to see Mr. Worthing. On very important business, Miss Fairfax states.

CECILY. Isn't Mr. Worthing in his library?

MERRIMAN. Mr. Worthing went over in the direction of the Rectory some time ago.

CECILY. Miss Fairfax! I suppose one of the many elderly good women who are associated with Uncle Jack in some of his philanthropic work in London. I don't quite like women who are interested in philanthropic work. I think it is so forward of them.

MERRIMAN. Yes, Miss.

CECILY. Pray ask the lady to come out here. Mr. Worthing is sure to be back soon. And you can bring tea.

MERRIMAN. Yes, Miss. [*Goes out R. CECILY closes her diary and rises.*]

[*MERRIMAN enters R with GWENDOLINE.*]

MERRIMAN. Miss Fairfax. [*Goes out R.*]

CECILY. Pray let me introduce myself to you. My name is Cecily Cardew.

GWENDOLINE [*coming to right of table*]. Cecily Cardew! [*Moves to her and shakes 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. [*Pauses.*] Pray sit down. [*Indicates settee as she moves toward it.*]

GWENDOLINE [*still standing*]. I may call you Cecily, may I not?

CECILY. With pleasure.

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

CECILY [*slightly bewildered*]. If you wish.

GWENDOLINE [*crossing to her*]. Then that is all settled, is it not?

CECILY. I hope so. [*Pause. They both sit together, CECILY at L C, GWENDOLINE on settee.*]

GWENDOLINE. Perhaps this might be favorable for my mentioning who I am. My father is Lord Bracknell. You have never heard of Papa, I suppose?

CECILY. I don't think so.

GWENDOLINE. Outside the family circle, Papa, I am glad to say, is entirely unknown. I think that is quite as it should be. The home seems to me to be the proper sphere for the man. Cecily, Mamma, whose views on education are remarkably strict, has brought me up to be extremely short-sighted. It's part of her system, so do you mind my looking at you through my glasses?

CECILY. Oh, not at all, Gwendoline. I am very fond of being looked at. [*There is a long pause as GWENDOLINE examines CECILY through her lorgnette. CECILY bears it patiently.*]

GWENDOLINE [*finally*]. You are here on a short visit, I suppose?