

Male Female duo

The Importance of Being Earnest

Oscar Wilde

Cecily and Algernon

Cecily. Uncle Jack would be very much annoyed if he knew you were staying on till next week, at the same hour.

Algernon. Oh, I don't care about Jack. I don't care for anybody in the whole world but you. I love you, Cecily. You will marry me, won't you?

Cecily. You silly boy! Of course. Why, we have been engaged for the last three months.

Algernon. For the last three months?

Cecily. Yes, it will be exactly three months on Thursday.

Algernon. But how did we become engaged?

Cecily. Well, 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.

Algernon. Darling! And when was the engagement actually settled?

Cecily. On the 14th of February 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 under this dear old tree here. The next day I bought this little ring in your name, and this is the little bangle with the true lover's knot I promised you always to wear.

Algernon. Did I give you this? It's very pretty, isn't it?

Cecily. 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 all your dear letters. [Kneels at table, opens box, and produces letters tied up with blue ribbon.]

Algernon. My letters! But, my own sweet Cecily, I have never written you any letters.

Cecily. 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.

Algernon. Oh, do let me read them, Cecily?

Cecily. Oh, I couldn't possibly. They would make you far too conceited. [Replaces box.] The three you wrote me after I had broken of the engagement are so beautiful, and so badly spelled, that even now I can hardly read them without crying a little.

Algernon. But was our engagement ever broken off?

Cecily. Of course it was. On the 22nd of last March. You can see the entry if you like. [Shows diary.] 'To-day I broke off my engagement with Ernest. I feel it is better to do so. The weather still continues charming.'

Algernon. But why on earth did you break it off? What had I done? I had done nothing at all. Cecily, I am very much hurt indeed to hear you broke it off. Particularly when the weather was so charming.

Cecily. It would hardly have been a really serious engagement if it hadn't been broken off at least once. But I forgave you before the week was out.

Algernon. [Crossing to her, and kneeling.] What a perfect angel you are, Cecily.

Cecily. You dear romantic boy. [He kisses her, she puts her fingers through his hair.] I hope your hair curls naturally, does it?

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

Cecily. I am so glad.

Algernon. You'll never break off our engagement again, 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.

Algernon. Yes, of course. [Nervously.]

Cecily. You must not laugh at me, darling, but it had always been a girlish dream of mine to love some one whose name was Ernest. [**Algernon** rises, **Cecily** also.] There is something in that name that seems to inspire absolute confidence. I pity any poor married woman whose husband is not called Ernest.

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

Cecily. But what name?

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

Cecily. But I don't like the name of Algernon.

Algernon. Well, my own dear, sweet, loving little darling, 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. Half of the chaps who get into the Bankruptcy Court are called Algernon. But seriously, Cecily... [Moving to her]... if my name was Algy, couldn't you love me?

Cecily. [Rising.] I might respect you, Ernest, I might admire your character, but I fear that I should not be able to give you my undivided attention.

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Jack and Gwendolen

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. In fact, I am never wrong.

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 well aware of the fact. And I often wish that in public, at any rate, you had been more demonstrative. For me you have always had an irresistible fascination. Even before I met you I was far from indifferent to you. [Jack looks at her in amazement.] We live, as I hope you know, Mr Worthing, in an age of ideals. The fact is constantly mentioned in the more expensive monthly magazines, and has reached the provincial pulpits, I am told; and my ideal has always been to love some one of the name of 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!

Jack. But you don't really 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 supposing it was something else? Do you mean to say you couldn't love me then?

Gwendolen. [Glibly.] Ah! that is clearly a metaphysical speculation, and like most metaphysical speculations has very little reference at all to the actual facts of real life, as we know them.

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. Besides, Jack is a notorious domesticity for John! And I pity any woman who is married to a man called John. She would probably never be allowed to know the entrancing pleasure of a single moment's solitude. The only really safe name is Ernest

Jack. Gwendolen, I must get christened at once—I mean we must get married at once. There is no time to be lost.

Gwendolen. Married, Mr. Worthing?

Jack. [Astounded.] Well... surely. You know that I love you, and you led me to believe, Miss Fairfax, that you were not absolutely indifferent to me.

Gwendolen. I adore you. But you haven't proposed to me yet. Nothing has been said at all about marriage. The subject has not even been touched on.

Jack. Well... may I propose to you now?

Gwendolen. I think it would be an admirable opportunity. And to spare you any possible disappointment, Mr. Worthing, I think it only fair to tell you quite frankly before-hand that I am fully determined to accept you.

Jack. Gwendolen!

Gwendolen. Yes, Mr. Worthing, what have you got to say to me?

Jack. You know what I have got to say to you.

Gwendolen. Yes, but you don't say it.

Jack. Gwendolen, will you marry me? [Goes on his knees.]

Gwendolen. Of course I will, darling. How long you have been about it! I am afraid you have had very little experience in how to propose.

Jack. My own one, I have never loved any one in the world but you.

Gwendolen. Yes, but men often propose for practice. I know my brother Gerald does. All my girl-friends tell me so. What wonderfully blue eyes you have, Ernest! They are quite, quite, blue. I hope you will always look at me just like that, especially when there are other people present. [Enter **Lady Bracknell.**]

Back to Methuselah

George Bernard Shaw

Eve and the Serpent

THE SERPENT: Eve.

EVE: Who is that?

THE SERPENT: It is I. I have come to shew you my beautiful new hood. See!

EVE: Oh! But who taught you to speak?

THE SERPENT: You and Adam. I have crept through the grass, and hidden, and listened to you.

EVE: That was wonderfully clever of you.

THE SERPENT: I am the most subtle of all the creatures of the field.

EVE: Your hood is most lovely. Pretty thing! Do you love your godmother Eve?

THE SERPENT: I adore her.

EVE: Eve's wonderful darling snake. Eve will never be lonely now that her snake can talk to her.

THE SNAKE: I can talk of many things. I am very wise. It was I who whispered the word to you that you did not know. Dead. Death. Die.

EVE: Why do you remind me of it? I forgot it when I saw your beautiful hood. You must not remind me of unhappy things.

THE SERPENT: Death is not an unhappy thing when you have learnt how to conquer it.

EVE: How can I conquer it?

THE SERPENT: By another thing, called birth.

EVE: What? B-birth?

THE SERPENT: Yes, birth.

EVE: What is birth?

THE SERPENT: The serpent never dies. Some day you shall see me
 come out of this beautiful skin, a new snake with a
 new and lovelier skin. That is birth.

EVE: I have seen that. It is wonderful.

You Never Can Tell

George Bernard Shaw

The Young Lady and The Dentist

The Young Lady: *(Handing him the glass)* Thank you.

The Dentist: That was my first tooth.

The Young Lady: Your first! Do you mean to say that you began practising on me?

The Dentist: Every dentist has to begin with somebody.

The Young Lady: Yes, somebody in hospital, not people who pay.

The Dentist: Oh, the hospital doesn't count. I only meant my first tooth in private practice. Why didn't you let me give you gas?

The Young Lady: Because you said it would be five shillings extra.

The Dentist: Oh, don't say that. It makes me feel as if I had hurt you for the sake of five shillings.

The Young Lady: Well, so you have. Why shouldn't you? It's your business to hurt people.

You have a good view of the sea from your rooms. Are they expensive?

The Dentist: Yes.

The Young Lady: You don't own the whole house do you?

The Dentist: No.

The Young Lady: I thought not. Your furniture isn't quite the latest thing, is it?

The Dentist: It's my landlord's.

The Young Lady: Does he own that toothache chair?

The Dentist: No: I have that on a hire-purchase system.

The Young Lady: I thought so. I suppose you haven't been here long?

The Dentist: Six weeks. Is there anything else you would like to know?

The Young Lady: Any family?

The Dentist: I am not married.

The Young Lady: Of course not. Anybody can see that. I meant sisters and mother and that sort of thing.

The Dentist: Not on the premises.

The Young Lady: Hm! If you've been here six weeks, and mine was your first tooth, the practice can't be very large can it?

The Dentist: Not as yet.

The Young Lady: Well, good luck! Five Shillings, you said it would be?

The Dentist: Five shillings.

The Young Lady: Do you charge five shillings for everything?

The Dentist: Yes.

The Young Lady: Why?

The Dentist: It's my system. I'm what's called a five shilling dentist.

The Young Lady: How nice! Well, here! A nice new five-shilling piece! Your first fee! Make a hole in it with the thing you drill people's teeth with; and wear it on your watch-chain.

The Dentist: Thank you.

