

The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde

Act 2

*Gwendolen is in the garden of Mr Worthing's manor house. She is greeted by Cecily Cardew. They both believe they are in love with Mr Ernest Worthing.*

GWENDOLEN:

Cecily Cardew? 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. I may call you Cecily, may I not? And you will always call me Gwendolen, won't you? Then that is all quite settled.

You are here on a short visit, I suppose. Really? Your mother, no doubt, or some female relative of advanced years resides here also?

Your guardian? Oh! It is strange he 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. 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 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 - Well, to speak with perfect candour, Cecily, I wish that you were fully forty-two and more than usually plain for your age.

Ah! That accounts for it. Of course you are quite, quite sure that it is not Mr Ernest Worthing who is your guardian? I beg your pardon?

My darling Cecily, I think there must be some slight error. Mr Ernest Worthing is engaged to me. 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. I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read on the train. I am so sorry dear, Cecily, if it is any disappointment to you, but I am afraid I have the prior claim.

I am known for the gentleness of my disposition and the extraordinary sweetness of my nature, but I warn you, Miss Cardew, you may go too far. From the moment I saw you I distrusted you. I felt that you were false and deceitful. I am never deceived in such matters. My first impressions of people are invariably right.