**SIDE 2 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.  [A pause.  They both sit down together.]

**Gwendolen.** Cecily, mamma, whose views on education are remarkably strict, has brought me up to be extremely short-sighted; it is part of her system; so do you mind my looking at you through my glasses?

**Cecily.**  Oh! not at all, Gwendolen.  I am very fond of being looked at.

**Gwendolen.**  [After examining **Cecily** carefully through a lorgnette.]  You are here on a short visit, I suppose.

**Cecily.**  Oh no!  I live here.

**Gwendolen.**  [Severely.]  Really?  Your mother, no doubt, or some female relative of advanced years, resides here also?

**Cecily.**  Oh no!  I have no mother, nor, in fact, any relations.

**Gwendolen.**  Indeed?

**Cecily.**  My dear guardian, with the assistance of Miss Prism, has the arduous task of looking after me.

**Gwendolen.**  Your guardian?

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

**Gwendolen.**  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.  [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 candor, 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 honor.  Disloyalty would be as impossible to him as deception.  But even men of the noblest possible moral character are extremely susceptible to the influence of the physical charms of others.

**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.**  [Sitting down again.]  Ernest never mentioned to me that he had a brother.

**Cecily.**  I am sorry to say they have not been on good terms for a long time.

**Gwendolen.**  Ah! that accounts for it. Cecily, you have lifted a load from my mind.  I was growing almost anxious.  It would have been terrible if any cloud had come across a friendship like ours, would it not?  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 his.

**Gwendolen.**  [Inquiringly.]  I beg your pardon?

**Cecily.**  [Rather shy and confidingly.]  Dearest Gwendolen, there is no reason why I should make a secret of it to you.  Our little county newspaper is sure to chronicle the fact next week.  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.  The announcement will appear in the *Morning Post* on Saturday at the latest.

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