Gwendolen and Cecily are angry with Jack and Algernon now they know their real names – neither of them are called Ernest. The two women are inside the house. The men come in trying to look and sound cheerful.

Jack and Algernon
[whistling Daisy, Daisy]

Gwendolen
I'm sure they're feeling sorry. Let's not say anything.

Cecily
Certainly not. Mr Moncrieff, why did you pretend to be my guardian's brother?

Algernon
So that I had the opportunity to meet you.

Cecily
That seems a satisfactory explanation, doesn't it Gwendolen?

Gwendolen
Yes, if you can believe him.

Cecily
I don't. But his answer was so beautiful.

Gwendolen
True. In matters of great importance, it's style, not truth that is essential. Mr Worthing, why did you pretend to have a brother? Was it so you could come to London to see me?

Jack
Do you have any doubts, dear Gwendolen?

Gwendolen
I have serious doubts. But I intend to ignore them. Cecily, should we forgive them?

Cecily
Yes. I mean no. Probably not. What about their names?
Gwendolen
True! I had forgotten!

Gwendolen and Cecily
Your names are still a huge problem!

Jack and Algernon
Our names! Is that all? But we are going to be christened with a different name this afternoon.

Gwendolen
You are prepared to do this terrible thing for me, Jack?

Jack
I am.

Cecily
To please me you are ready to face this awful experience, Algernon?

Algernon
I am!

Gwendolen
How can people talk about the equality of the sexes! Men have moments of physical courage which we women know absolutely nothing about.

Cecily
Jack, darling!

Algernon
Cecily, darling!

Narrator
And they fall into each other's arms. Merriman comes in and coughs loudly. He announces a visitor.

Merriman
Ahem! Ahem! Lady Bracknell!

Jack
Good heavens!

Lady Bracknell
Gwendolen! What does this mean?

Gwendolen
Simply that I am engaged to Mr Worthing, mamma.
Lady Bracknell
Mr Worthing, I followed my daughter by train. Gwendolen is meant to be attending a university lecture. Well, that is what her father thinks. All communication between yourself and my daughter must end **immediately**.

Jack
We are engaged to be married, Lady Bracknell!

Lady Bracknell
You are nothing of the kind, sir. And now, what about Algernon! … Algernon!

Algernon
Yes, Aunt Augusta.

Lady Bracknell
May I ask if it is in this house that your sick friend Mr Bunbury lives?

Algernon
Oh! No! Bunbury doesn't live here. Bunbury is somewhere else at the moment. In fact, Bunbury is dead.

Lady Bracknell
Dead! When did he die?

Algernon
Oh! I killed Bunbury this afternoon. I mean poor Bunbury died this afternoon.

Lady Bracknell
He died so **suddenly**? What did he die of?

Algernon
I mean he was discovered! The doctors discovered that he could not live, so he died.

Lady Bracknell
He seems to have had great **confidence** in the opinion of his doctors. I am glad that he **finally** made up his mind to take some definite course of action, and acted under proper medical advice. And now, Mr Worthing, who is the young person whose hand my nephew Algernon is holding in an unnecessary way?

Jack
That is Miss Cecily Cardew, I'm her guardian.

Algernon
I am engaged to Cecily, Aunt Augusta.

Lady Bracknell
I beg your pardon?
Cecily
Mr Moncrieff and I are engaged to be married, Lady Bracknell.

Narrator
Lady Bracknell has to sit down at this news.

Lady Bracknell
There seems to be something unusually exciting in the air – the number of engagements seems to be above average. Mr Worthing, is Miss Cardew at all connected with any railway stations in London? I am simply asking. Until yesterday I didn’t know any families or people whose origin was a station.

Jack
Miss Cecily Cardew is the granddaughter of the late Mr Thomas Cardew of 149 Belgrave Square; Gervase Park, Surrey; and the Sporran, Fifeshire.

Lady Bracknell
Three addresses. That always gives me confidence. I am not unsatisfied.

Jack
How extremely kind of you, Lady Bracknell!

Lady Bracknell
Now Gwendolen, we have to leave… Just one thing, Mr Worthing, does Miss Cardew have any money?

Jack
Oh! About £130,000. That is all. Goodbye, Lady Bracknell. So pleased to have seen you.

Lady Bracknell
A moment, Mr Worthing. £130,000! Miss Cardew seems to me a most attractive young lady, now that I look at her. Come over here, dear… Turn round, dear child, so I can see your face. There are definite social possibilities in your face. Algernon!

Algernon
Yes, Aunt Augusta!

Lady Bracknell
There are definite social possibilities in Miss Cardew.

Algernon
I don’t care about social possibilities.

Lady Bracknell
Never speak disrespectfully of Society, Algernon. Only people who can’t get into it do that. Now Miss Cardew, of course you know that Algernon has nothing but his debts to depend upon. But I do not approve of marriages for money. Well, I suppose I must give my consent.
 Algernon
Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

Lady Bracknell
The marriage had better take place quite soon. I am not in favour of long engagements. They give people the chance to find out each other’s characters before marriage – never a good thing.

Jack
I’m sorry to interrupt you, Lady Bracknell, but I am Miss Cardew’s guardian, and I don’t give my consent to this marriage.

Lady Bracknell
And why not may I ask? Isn’t Algernon an extremely eligible young man? He has nothing, but he looks everything. What more can one desire?

Jack
The fact is that I do not approve of his moral character. He has not been honest.

Narrator
Algernon and Cecily look at him amazed.

Lady Bracknell
Untruthful! Algernon? Impossible!

Jack
I’m afraid there is no doubt. This afternoon he came to my house pretending to be my brother. He has succeeded in one afternoon to change the affections of dear Cecily. He then stayed to tea, and ate all the muffins.

Lady Bracknell
Ahem! Mr Worthing, after careful consideration I have decided to forgive my nephew’s behaviour.

Jack
That is very generous of you, Lady Bracknell. However I have not changed my mind. I do not give my consent.
Vocabulary

guardian
someone who is legally responsible for someone else such as a child whose parents cannot look after them (perhaps because they have died)

christened
given a name (usually as a baby) during a religious ceremony in the Christian Church

courage
the ability to face difficult situations or danger without showing fear

late
recently died

Surrey
a county in England near London

Fifeshire
a county in Scotland

confidence
thinking that someone is good and honest

disrespectful
showing lack of respect

debts
amounts of money you owe to someone

consent
permission

eligible
suitable as someone to marry

approve
to think someone or something is good

moral
good and honest

muffins
small, round type of bread that is sliced and eaten hot with butter
Quiz

1. Why do Gwendolen and Cecily think that Jack and Algernon are very brave?
   (Hint: They both plan to get christened.)
   a) Because they are going to talk to Lady Bracknell about the engagements.
   b) Because they are going to change their names.
   c) Because they are going to meet Jack’s brother.

2. What does Algernon say about Bunbury?
   (Hint: What does he tell Lady Bracknell?)
   a) He’s dead – Correct – Well done!
   b) He was found in the house. – Wrong – Algernon says Bunbury has been 'discovered' but he doesn’t mean in that way.
   c) He’s gone to live somewhere else. – Wrong – He says 'Bunbury is somewhere else at the moment. In fact, Bunbury is dead.'

3. Who does not agree to the marriage of Algernon and Cecily?
   (Hint: Cecily’s ‘guardian’ doesn’t agree to the marriage.)
   a) Lady Bracknell – Wrong – She does agree.
   b) Jack – Correct – Well done!
   c) Gwendolen – Wrong – It was someone else.

Feedback

1. Why do Gwendolen and Cecily think that Jack and Algernon are very brave?
   a) Because they are going to talk to Lady Bracknell. – Wrong – It is for a different reason.
   b) Because they are going to change their names. – Correct – Well done!
   c) Because they are going to meet Jack’s brother. – Wrong – Jack doesn’t have a brother.

2. What does Algernon say about Bunbury?
   a) He’s dead – Correct – Well done!
   b) He was found in the house. – Wrong – Algernon says Bunbury has been 'discovered' but he doesn’t mean in that way.
   c) He’s gone to live somewhere else. – Wrong – He says 'Bunbury is somewhere else at the moment. In fact, Bunbury is dead.'

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   a) Lady Bracknell – Wrong – She does agree.
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