

UTSC Drama Society's Summer Reading Series
Episode 6: *Importance of Being Earnest* by
Oscar Wilde

Colette

Welcome to the UTSC Drama Society's Summer Reading Series. On this episode we're going to hear an excerpt from Oscar Wilde's 'The Importance of Being Earnest.' Jack Worthing has a secret. He leaves his country home to go into the city, telling everyone that he is going to help his wicked brother Earnest. However, when he arrives in the city it is truly to see his beloved Gwendolyn - who know him as only Earnest. Gwendolyn's cousin Algernon finds out about this and takes interest in Jack's ward, Cecily and decides he is going to come into the country and pretend to be Jack's brother Earnest. Jack does not approve and must find a way to send Algernon back to the city without giving away his own secret. This is 'The Importance of Being Earnest' by Oscar Wilde.

Enter Merriman.

Merriman

I have put Mr. Ernest's things in the room next to yours, sir. I suppose that is all right?

Jack

What?

Merriman

Mr. Ernest's luggage, sir. I have unpacked it and put it in the room next to your own.

Jack

His luggage?

Merriman

Yes, sir. Three portmanteaus, a dressing-case, two hat-boxes, and a large luncheon-basket.

Algernon

I am afraid I can't stay more than a week this time.

Jack

Merriman, order the dog-cart at once. Mr. Ernest has been suddenly called back to town.

Merriman

Yes, sir.

Goes back into the house.

Algernon

What a fearful liar you are, Jack. I have not been called back to town at all.

Jack

Yes, you have.

Algernon

I haven't heard anyone call me.

Jack

Your duty as a gentleman calls you back.

Algernon

My duty as a gentleman has never interfered with my pleasures in the smallest degree.

Jack

I can quite understand that.

Algernon

Well, Cecily is a darling.

Jack

You are not to talk of Miss Cardew like that. I don't like it.

Algernon

Well, I don't like your clothes. You look perfectly ridiculous in them. Why on earth don't you go up and change? It is perfectly childish to be in deep mourning for a man who is actually staying for a whole week with you in your house as a guest. I call it grotesque.

Jack

You are certainly not staying with me for a whole week as a guest or anything else. You have got to leave . . . by the four-five train.

Algernon

I certainly won't leave you so long as you are in mourning. It would be most unfriendly. If I were in mourning you would stay with me, I suppose. I should think it very unkind if you didn't.

Jack

Well, will you go if I change my clothes?

Algernon

Yes, if you are not too long. I never saw anybody take so long to dress, with such little result.

Jack

Well, at any rate, that is better than being always over-dressed as you are.

Algernon

If I am occasionally a little over-dressed, I make up for it by always being immensely over-educated.

Jack

Your vanity is ridiculous, your conduct an outrage, and your presence in my garden utterly absurd. However, you have got to catch the four-five, and I

hope you will have a pleasant journey back to town. This Bunburying, as you call it, has not been a great success for you.

Goes into the house.

Algernon

I think it has been a great success. I'm in love with Cecily, and that is everything.

Enter Cecily at the back of the garden. She picks up the can and begins to water the flowers.

But I must see her before I go, and make arrangements for another Bunbury. Ah, there she is.

Cecily

Oh, I merely came back to water the roses. I thought you were with Uncle Jack.

Algernon

He's gone to order the dog-cart for me.

Cecily

Oh, is he going to take you for a nice drive?

Algernon

He's going to send me away.

Cecily

Then have we got to part?

Algernon

I am afraid so. It's a very painful parting.

Cecily

It is always painful to part from people whom one has known for a very brief space of time. The absence of old friends one can endure with equanimity. But even a momentary separation from anyone to whom one has just been introduced is almost unbearable.

Algernon

Thank you.

Enter Merriman.

Merriman

The dog-cart is at the door, sir.

Algernon looks appealingly at Cecily.

Cecily

It can wait, Merriman for . . . five minutes.

Merriman

Yes, Miss.

Exit Merriman.

Algernon

I hope, Cecily, I shall not offend you if I state quite frankly and openly that you seem to me to be in every way the visible personification of absolute perfection.

Cecily

I think your frankness does you great credit, Ernest. If you will allow me, I will copy your remarks into my diary.

Goes over to table and begins writing in diary.

Algernon

Do you really keep a diary? I'd give anything to look at it. May I?

Cecily

Oh no. You see, it is simply a very young girl's record of her own thoughts and impressions, and consequently meant for publication. When it appears in volume form I hope you will order a copy. But pray, Ernest, don't stop. I delight in taking down from dictation. I have reached 'absolute perfection'. You can go on. I am quite ready for more.

Algernon

Ahem! Ahem!

Cecily

Oh, don't cough, Ernest. When one is dictating one should speak fluently and not cough. Besides, I don't know how to spell a cough.

Writes as Algernon speaks.

Algernon

Cecily, ever since I first looked upon your wonderful and incomparable beauty, I have dared to love you wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly.

Cecily

I don't think that you should tell me that you love me wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly. Hopelessly doesn't seem to make much sense, does it?

Algernon

Cecily!

Enter Merriman.

Merriman

The dog-cart is waiting, sir.

Algernon

Tell it to come round next week, at the same hour.

Merriman

Looks at Cecily, who makes no sign.

Yes, sir.

He retires.

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 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 a 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.

The three you wrote me after I had broken off 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.

'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 a week before it was out.

Algernon

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.

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.

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 . . .

. . . if my name was Algy, couldn't you love me?

Cecily

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.

Algernon

Ahem! 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.

Algernon

I must see him at once on a most important christening—I mean on most important business.

Cecily

Oh!

Algernon

I shan't be away more than half an hour.

Cecily

Considering that we have been engaged since February the 14th, and that I only met you to-day for the first time, I think it is rather hard that you should leave me for such a long period as half an hour. Couldn't you make it twenty minutes?

Algernon

I'll be back in no time.

Kisses her and rushes down the garden.

Cecily

What an impetuous boy he is! I like his hair so much. I must enter his proposal in my diary.

Enter Merriman.

Merriman

A Miss Fairfax has 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

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.

Cecily

Miss Fairfax! I suppose one of the many good elderly 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.

Enter Merriman.

Merriman

Miss Fairfax.

Enter Gwendolen.

Exit Merriman.

Cecily

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

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.

Cecily

How nice of you to like me so much after we have known each other for such a comparatively short time. Pray sit down.

Gwendolen

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

Perhaps this might be a favourable opportunity for my mentioning who I am. My father is Lord Bracknell. You have heard of papa, I suppose?

Cecily

I don't think so.

Gwendolen

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. And certainly once a man begins to neglect his domestic duties he becomes painfully effeminate, does he not? And I don't like that. It makes men so very attractive. 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

You are here on a short visit, I suppose.

Cecily

Oh no! I live here.

Gwendolen

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 Cecily.

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 candour, 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 honour. 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. Modern, no less than Ancient History, supplies us with many most painful examples of what I refer to. If it were not so, indeed, History would be quite unreadable.

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

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. And now that I think of it I have never heard any man mention his brother. The subject seems distasteful to most men. 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.

In fact, I am going to be his.

Gwendolen

I beg your pardon?

Cecily

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

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

I am afraid you must be under some misconception. Ernest proposed to me exactly ten minutes ago.

Shows diary.

Examines diary through her lorgnette carefully.

Gwendolen

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.

Produces diary of her own.

I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read in the train. I am so sorry, dear Cecily, if it is any disappointment to you, but I am afraid I have the prior claim.

Cecily

It would distress me more than I can tell you, dear Gwendolen, if it caused you any mental or physical anguish, but I feel bound to point out that since Ernest proposed to you he clearly has changed his mind.

Gwendolen

If the poor fellow has been entrapped into any foolish promise I shall consider it my duty to rescue him at once, and with firm hand.

Cecily

Whatever unfortunate entanglement my dear boy may have got into, I will never reproach him with it after we are married.

Gwendolen

Do you allude to me, Miss Cardew, as an entanglement? You are presumptuous. On an occasion of this kind it becomes more than a moral duty to speak one's mind. It becomes a pleasure.

Cecily

Do you suggest, Miss Fairfax, that I entrapped Ernest into an engagement? How dare you? This is no time for wearing the shallow mask of manners. When I see a spade I call it a spade.

Gwendolen

I am glad to say that I have never seen a spade. It is obvious that our social spheres have been widely different.

Enter Merriman, followed by the footman. He carries a salver, table cloth, and plate stand. Cecily is about to retort. The presence of the servants exercises a restraining influence, under which both girls chafe.

Merriman

Shall I lay tea here as usual, Miss?

Cecily

Yes, as usual.

Merriman begins to clear and lay cloth. A long pause. Cecily and Gwendolen glare at each other.

Gwendolen

Are there many interesting walks in the vicinity, Miss Cardew?

Cecily

Oh! yes! a great many. From the top of one of the hills quite close one can see five counties.

Gwendolen

Five counties! I don't think I should like that; I hate crowds.

Cecily

I suppose that is why you live in town?

Gwendolen

Quite a well-kept garden this is, Miss Cardew.

Cecily

So glad you like it, Miss Fairfax.

Gwendolen

I had no idea there were any flowers in the country.

Cecily

Oh the flowers are as common here, Miss - Oh, flowers are as common here, Miss Fairfax, as people are in London.

Gwendolen

Personally I cannot understand how anybody manages to exist in the country, if anybody who is anybody does. The country always bores me to death.

Cecily

Ah! This is what the newspapers call agricultural depression, is it not? I believe the aristocracy are suffering very much from it just at present. It is almost an epidemic amongst them, I have been told. May I offer you some tea, Miss Fairfax?

Gwendolen

Thank you.

Detestable girl! But I require tea!

Cecily

Sugar?

Gwendolen

No, thank you. Sugar is not fashionable any more.

Cecily looks angrily at her, takes up the tongs and puts four lumps of sugar into the cup.

Cecily

Cake or bread and butter?

Gwendolen

Bread and butter, please. Cake is rarely seen at the best houses nowadays.

Cecily

Cecily cuts a very large slice of cake, and puts it on the tray.

Hand that to Miss Fairfax.

Merriman does so, and goes out with footman. Gwendolen drinks the tea and makes a grimace. Puts down cup at once, reaches out her hand to the bread and butter, looks at it, and finds it is cake. Rises in indignation.

Gwendolen

You have filled my tea with lumps of sugar, and though I asked most distinctly for bread and butter, you have given me cake. 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.

Cecily

To save my poor, innocent, trusting boy from the machinations of - To save my poor, innocent, trusting boy from the machinations of any other girl there are no lengths to which I would not go.

Gwendolen

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.

Cecily

It seems to me, Miss Fairfax, that I am trespassing on your valuable time. No doubt you have many other calls of a similar character to make in the neighbourhood.

Enter Jack.

Gwendolen

Ernest! My own Ernest!

Jack

Gwendolen! Darling!

Offers to kiss her.

Gwendolen

A moment! May I ask if you are engaged to be married to this young lady?

Jack

To dear little Cecily! Of course not! What could have put such an idea into your pretty little head?

Gwendolen

Thank you. You may!

Offers her cheek.

Cecily

I knew there must be some misunderstanding, Miss Fairfax. The gentleman whose arm is at present round your waist is my guardian, Mr. John Worthing.

Gwendolen

I beg your pardon?

Cecily

This is Uncle Jack.

Gwendolen

Jack! Oh!

Enter Algernon.

Cecily

Here is Ernest.

Algernon goes straight over to Cecily without noticing anyone else.

Algernon

My own love!

Offers to kiss her.

Cecily

A moment, Ernest! May I ask you—are you engaged to be married to this young lady?

Algernon

To what young lady? Good heavens! Gwendolen!

Cecily

Yes! to good heavens, Gwendolen, I mean to Gwendolen.

Algernon

Of course not! What could have put such an idea into your pretty little head?

Cecily

Thank you.

You may.

Algernon kisses her.

Gwendolen

I felt there was some slight error, Miss Cardew. The gentleman who is now embracing you is my cousin, Mr. Algernon Moncrieff.

Cecily

Algernon Moncrieff! Oh!

The two girls move towards each other and put their arms round each other's waists as if for protection.

Cecily

Are you called Algernon?

Algernon

I cannot deny it.

Cecily

Oh!

Gwendolen

Is your name really John?

Jack

I could deny it if I liked. I could deny anything if I liked. But my name certainly is John. It has been John for years.

Cecily

A gross deception has been practised on both of us.

Gwendolen

My poor wounded Cecily!

Cecily

My sweet wronged Gwendolen!

Gwendolen

You will call me sister, will you not?

They embrace. Jack and Algernon groan and walk up and down.

Cecily

There is just one question I would like to be allowed to ask my guardian.

Gwendolen

An admirable idea! Mr. Worthing, there is just one question I would like to be permitted to put to you. Where is your brother Ernest? We are both engaged to be married to your brother Ernest, so it is a matter of some importance to us to know where your brother Ernest is at present.

Jack

Gwendolen—Cecily—it is very painful for me to be forced to speak the truth. It is the first time in my life that I have ever been reduced to such a painful position, and I am really quite inexperienced in doing anything of the kind. However, I will tell you quite frankly that I have no brother Ernest. I have no brother at all. I never had a brother in my life, and I certainly have not the smallest intention of ever having one in the future.

Cecily

No brother at all?

Jack

None!

Gwendolen

Had you never a brother of any kind?

Jack

Never. Not even of any kind.

Gwendolen

I am afraid it is quite clear, Cecily, that neither of us is engaged to be married to any one.

Cecily

It is not a very pleasant position for a young girl suddenly to find herself in. Is it?

Gwendolen

Let us go into the house. They will hardly venture to come after us there.

Cecily

No, men are so cowardly, aren't they?

They retire into the house with scornful looks.

Jack

This ghastly state of things is what you call Bunburying, I suppose?

Algernon

Yes, and a perfectly wonderful Bunbury it is. The most wonderful Bunbury I have ever had in my life.

Jack

Well, you've no right whatsoever to Bunbury here.

Algernon

That is absurd. One has a right to Bunbury anywhere one chooses. Every serious Bunburyist knows that.

Jack

Serious Bunburyist! Good heavens!

Algernon

Well, one must be serious about something, if one wants to have any amusement in life. I happen to be serious about Bunburying. What on earth you are serious about I haven't got the remotest idea. About everything, I should fancy. You have such an absolutely trivial nature.

Jack

Well, the only small satisfaction I have in the whole of this wretched business is that your friend Bunbury is quite exploded. You won't be able to run down to the country quite so often as you used to do, dear Algy. And a very good thing too.

Algernon

Your brother is a little off colour, isn't he, dear Jack? You won't be able to disappear to London quite so frequently as your wicked custom was. And not a bad thing either.

Jack

As for your conduct towards Miss Cardew, I must say that your taking in a sweet, simple, innocent girl like that is quite inexcusable. To say nothing of the fact that she is my ward.

Algernon

I can see no possible defence at all for your deceiving a brilliant, clever, thoroughly experienced young lady like Miss Fairfax. To say nothing of the fact that she is my cousin.

Jack

I wanted to be engaged to Gwendolen, that is all. I love her.

Algernon

Well, I simply wanted to be engaged to Cecily. I adore her.

Jack

There is certainly no chance of your marrying Miss Cardew.

Algernon

I don't think there is much likelihood, Jack, of you and Miss Fairfax being united.

Jack

Well, that is no business of yours.

Algernon

If it was my business, I wouldn't talk about it.

Begins to eat muffins.

It is very vulgar to talk about one's business. Only people like stock-brokers do that, and then merely at dinner parties.

Jack

How can you sit there, calmly eating muffins when we are in this horrible trouble, I can't make out. You seem to me to be perfectly heartless.

Algernon

Well, I can't eat muffins in an agitated manner. The butter would probably get on my cuffs. One should always eat muffins quite calmly. It is the only way to eat them.

Jack

I say it's perfectly heartless your eating muffins at all, under the circumstances.

Algernon

When I am in trouble, eating is the only thing that consoles me. Indeed, when I am in really great trouble, as any one who knows me intimately will tell you, I refuse everything except food and drink. At the present moment I am eating muffins because I am unhappy. Besides, I am particularly fond of muffins.

Jack

Well, that is no reason why you should eat them all in that greedy way.

Takes muffins from Algernon.

Algernon

I wish you would have tea-cake instead. I don't like tea-cake.

Jack

Good heavens! I suppose a man may eat his own muffins in his own garden.

Algernon

But you have just said it was perfectly heartless to eat muffins.

Jack

I said it was perfectly heartless of you, under the circumstances. That is a very different thing.

Algernon

That may be. But the muffins are the same.

He seizes the muffin-dish from Jack.

Jack

Algy, I wish to goodness you would go.

Algernon

You can't possibly ask me to go without having some dinner. It's absurd. I never go without my dinner. No one ever does, except vegetarians and people like that. Besides I have just made arrangements with Dr. Chasuble to be christened at a quarter to six under the name of Ernest.

Jack

My dear fellow, the sooner you give up that nonsense the better. I made arrangements this morning with Dr. Chasuble to be christened myself at a 5:30, and I naturally will take the name of Ernest. Gwendolen would wish it. We can't both be christened Ernest. It's absurd. Besides, I have a perfect right to be christened if I like. There is no evidence at all that I have ever been christened by anybody. I should think it extremely probable I never was, and so does Dr. Chasuble. It is entirely different in your case. You have been christened already.

Algernon

Yes, but I have not been christened for years.

Jack

Yes, but you have been christened. That is the important thing.

Algernon

Quite so. So I know my constitution can stand it. If you are not quite sure about your ever having been christened, I must say I think it rather dangerous your venturing on it now. It might make you very unwell. You can hardly have forgotten that someone very closely connected with you was very nearly carried off this week in Paris by a severe chill.

Jack

Yes, but you said yourself that a severe chill was not hereditary.

Algernon

It usen't to be, I know—but I daresay it is now. Science is always making wonderful improvements in things.

Jack

Oh, that is nonsense; you are always talking nonsense.

Algernon

Jack, you are at the muffins again! I wish you wouldn't. There are only two left.

I told you I was particularly fond of muffins.

Jack

But I hate tea-cake.

Algernon

Why on earth then do you allow tea-cake to be served up for your guests? What ideas you have of hospitality!

Jack

Algernon! I have already told you to go. I don't want you here. Why don't you go!

Algernon

I haven't quite finished my tea yet! and there is still one muffin left.

Jack groans, and sinks into a chair. Algernon still continues eating.

Curtain.

