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Start CECILY [*rising, moving C*]. Uncle Jack would be very much annoyed if he knew you were staying on till next week at the same hour.

ALGY. Oh, I don't care about Jack. [*Crosses quickly to her.*] I don't care for anybody in the whole world but you. I love you, Cecily. You will marry me, won't you? [*Takes her hand.*]

CECILY [*blandly*]. You silly boy! [*Pats his cheek.*] Of course. Why, we have been engaged for the last three months.

ALGY [*bewildered*]. For the last three months?

CECILY. Yes. [*Moving L C.*] It will be exactly three months on Thursday.

ALGY [*sitting weakly on settee.*] But how did we become engaged?

CECILY. Well—[*Comes back and sits beside him.*]—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.

ALGY [*embracing her*]. Darling! And when was the engagement actually settled?

CECILY. On the fourteenth of June 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 here. The next day I bought this little ring in your name—[*Holds up hand to show ring.*]—and this is the bangle with the true lover's knot I promised you always to wear.

ALGY [*taking her hand*]. Did I give you this? It's very pretty, isn't it?

CECILY [*rising, crossing R C*]. 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

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all your dear letters. [*Kneels at chair left of table, opens box and produces letters tied with blue ribbon.*]

ALGY. My letters! [*Rises.*] But, my own sweet Cecily, I have never written—you any letters.

CECILY [*turning to him*]. 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.

ALGY [*moving to her*]. Oh, do let me read them, Cecily!

CECILY [*sitting left of table*]. Oh, I couldn't possibly. They would make you far too conceited. [*Replaces letters in box.*]

ALGY [*kneeling beside her*]. What a perfect angel you are, Cecily!

CECILY. You dear, romantic boy! [*He pulls her face close to him and kisses her. She puts her fingers through his hair.*] I hope your hair curls naturally. Does it?

ALGY. Yes, darling, with a little help from others. Stop

CECILY. I am so glad!

ALGY. You'll never break off our engagement, 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.

ALGY [*nervously*]. 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. [*Both rise and move C.*] There is something in that name that seems to inspire absolute confidence. I pity any poor married woman whose husband is not called Ernest.

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

CECILY. But what name?

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

CECILY [*distastefully*]. But I don't like the name of Algernon. [*Crosses L C. ALGY follows.*]

ALGY. Well, 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