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Start ALGY [*rising, moving to left of table C*]. How do you do, my dear Ernest? What brings *you* up to town?

JACK. Oh, pleasure, pleasure! What else should bring one anywhere? [*Crosses to desk D R, tossing hat down.*] Eating, as usual, I see, Algy!

ALGY [*stiffly*]. I believe it *is* customary in good society to take some slight refreshment at five o'clock. Where have you been since last Thursday? [*Sits left of table C.*]

JACK. Oh, in the country.

ALGY. What on earth do you do there?

JACK [*pulling off his gloves*]. When one is in town one amuses oneself. When one is in the country one amuses other people. It is excessively boring. [*Tosses gloves on desk.*]

ALGY. And who are the people you amuse?

JACK [*airily*]. Oh, neighbors, neighbors!

ALGY. Got nice neighbors in your part of Shropshire?

JACK [*coming right of table C*]. Perfectly horrid! Never speak to any of them.

ALGY [*helping himself to more cucumber sandwiches from plate*]. How immensely you must amuse them. By the way, Shropshire *is* your county?

JACK. Eh? Shropshire? Yes, of course. [*Scrutinizes table C.*] Hallo! Why all these cups? Why cucumber sandwiches? Who is coming to tea?

ALGY. Oh, merely Aunt Augusta and Gwendoline.

JACK. How perfectly delightful!

ALGY. Yes, that is all very well, but I am afraid Aunt Augusta won't quite approve of your being here.

JACK [*sitting right of table*]. May I ask why?

ALGY. My dear fellow, the way you flirt with Gwendoline is perfectly disgraceful. It is almost as bad as the way Gwendoline flirts with you.

JACK [*staunchly*]. I am in love with Gwendoline. I have come up to town expressly to propose to her.

ALGY. I thought you had come up for pleasure? I call that business.

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JACK [*half turning his back on ALGY*]. How utterly unromantic you are!

ALGY [*between bites of cucumber sandwiches*]. I really don't see anything romantic in proposing. It is very romantic to be in love. But there is nothing romantic about a definite proposal. Why, one may be accepted. [*An afterthought.*] One usually is, I believe. Then the excitement is all over. The very essence of romance is uncertainty. [JACK *makes as if to take a cucumber sandwich*. ALGY *takes up plate and puts it on his knee.*] Please don't touch the cucumber sandwiches. They are ordered specially for Aunt Augusta. [*Takes one and eats it.*]

JACK. Well, you have been eating them all the time.

ALGY. That is quite a different matter. She is my aunt. [*Pushes plate of bread-and-butter sandwiches toward JACK.*] Have some bread and butter. The bread and butter is for Gwendoline. Gwendoline is devoted to bread and butter.

JACK [*taking plate and placing it on his knee, and then starting to eat a sandwich*]. And very good bread and butter it is, too.

ALGY. Well, my dear fellow, you need not eat it as if you were going to eat it all. You behave as if you were married to her already. You are not married to her already, and I don't think you ever will be.

JACK. Why on earth do you say that?

ALGY. Well, in the first place, girls never marry the men they flirt with. Girls don't think it right.

JACK. Oh, that's nonsense! [*Both men eat sandwiches as scene continues.*]

ALGY. It isn't. It is a great truth. It accounts for the extraordinary number of bachelors that one sees all over town. In the second place, I don't give my consent.

JACK. *Your consent!*

ALGY. My dear fellow, Gwendoline is my first cousin; and before I allow you to marry her, you will have to clear up the whole question of Cecily. [*Rises, crosses U R and pulls bell cord.*]

Stop