

(2) (746) [1w / 1m]

Lady Bracknell interviews Jack

Brk: You can take a seat, Mr. Worthing.

Jk: Thank you, Lady Bracknell, I prefer standing.

Brk: I feel bound to tell you that you are not down on my list of eligible young men [...]. However, I am quite ready to enter your name, should your answers be what a really affectionate mother requires. Do you smoke?

Jk: Well, yes, I must admit I smoke.

Brk: I am glad to hear it. A man should always have an occupation of some kind. [...] How old are you?

Jk: Twenty-nine.

Brk: A very good age to be married at. I have always been of opinion that a man who desires to get married should know either everything or nothing. Which do you know?

Jk: I know nothing, Lady Bracknell.

Brk: I am pleased to hear it. I do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone. [...] What is your income?

Jk: Between seven and eight thousand a year.

Brk: In land, or in investments?

Jk: In investment, chiefly.

Brk: That is satisfactory. [...]

Jk: I have a country house with some land, of course, attached to it, about fifteen hundred acres, I believe. [...]

Brk: A country house! How many bedrooms? Well, that point can be cleared up afterwards. You have a town house, I hope? A girl with a simple, unspoiled nature, like Gwendolen, could hardly be expected to reside in the country.

Jk: Well, I own a house in Belgrave Square. [...]

Brk: What number in Belgrave Square?

Jk: 149.

Brk: The unfashionable side. I thought there was something. However, that could easily be altered.

Jk: Do you mean the fashion, or the side?

Brk: Both, if necessary, I presume. [...] – Are your parents living?

Jk: I have lost both my parents.

Brk: Both? To lose one parent may be regarded as a misfortune, to lose both seems like carelessness. Who was your father? He was evidently a man of some wealth. [...]

Jk: I am afraid I really don't know. The fact is, Lady Bracknell, I said I had lost my parents. It would be nearer the truth to say that my parents seem to have lost me. I don't actually know who I am by birth. I was – well, I was found.

Brk: Found!

Jk: The late Mr. Thomas Cardew, an old gentleman of a very charitable and kindly disposition, found me, and gave me the name of Worthing, because he happened to have a first-class ticket for Worthing in his pocket at the time. – Worthing is a place in Sussex. – It is a seaside resort.

Brk: Where did the charitable gentleman who had a first-class ticket for this seaside resort find you?

Jk: In a handbag.

Brk: A handbag?

Jk: Yes, Lady Bracknell. I was in a handbag – a somewhat large, black leather handbag, with handles to it – an ordinary handbag, in fact.

Brk: In what locality did this Mr. James, or Thomas, Cardew come across this ordinary handbag?

Jk: In the cloakroom at Victoria Station. It was given to him in mistake for his own.

Brk: The cloakroom at Victoria Station?

Jk: Yes. The Brighton line.

Brk: The line is immaterial, Mr. Worthing. [...] To be born, or at any rate, bred in a handbag, whether it had handles or not, seems to me to display a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that remind one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution. [...]

Jk: May I ask you then what you would advise me to do? I need hardly say I would do anything in the world to ensure Gwendolen's happiness.

Brk: I would strongly advise you, Mr. Worthing, to [...] make a definite effort to produce at any rate one parent, of either sex, before the season is quite over.

Jk: Well, I don't see how I could possibly manage to do that. I can produce the handbag at any moment. It is in my dressing-room at home. I really think that should satisfy you, Lady Bracknell.

Brk: Me, sir! What has it to do with me? You can hardly imagine that I and Lord Bracknell would dream of allowing our only daughter – a girl brought up with the utmost care – to marry into a cloakroom, and form an alliance with a parcel? Good morning, Mr. Worthing!