



Duchess of Berwick
From *Lady Windermere's Fan*
By Oscar Wilde

Age Range: Young Adult
Style: Dramatic, Classical

Monologue:

“Ah, what indeed, dear? That is the point. He goes to see her continually, and stops for hours at a time, and while he is there she is not at home to any one. Not that many ladies call on her, dear, but she has a great many disreputable men friends--my own brother particularly, as I told you--and that is what makes it so dreadful about Windermere. We looked upon *him* as being such a model husband, but I am afraid there is no doubt about it. My dear nieces--you know the Saville girls, don't you?--such nice domestic creatures--plain, dreadfully plain,--but so good--well, they're always at the window doing fancy work, and making ugly things for the poor, which I think so useful of them in these dreadful socialistic days, and this terrible woman has taken a house in Curzon Street, right opposite them--such a respectable street, too! I don't know what we're coming to! And they tell me that Windermere goes there four and five times a week--they *see* him. They can't help it--and although they never talk scandal, they--well, of course--they remark on it to every one. And the worst of it all is that I have been told that this woman has got a great deal of money out of somebody, for it seems that she came to London six months ago without anything at all to speak of, and now she has this charming house in Mayfair, drives her ponies in the Park every afternoon and all--well, all--since she has known poor dear Windermere. It's quite true, my dear. The whole of London knows about it. That is why I felt it was better to come and talk to you, and advise you to take Windermere away at once to Homburg or to Aix, where he'll have something to amuse him, and where you can watch him all day long. I assure you, my dear, that on several occasions after I was first married, I had to pretend to be very ill, and was obliged to drink the most unpleasant mineral waters, merely to get Berwick out of town. He was so extremely susceptible. Though I am bound to say he never gave away any large sums of money to anybody. He is far too high-principled for that!”

Play Synopsis:

The play's action is put in motion by Lady Windermere's jealousy over her husband's apparent interest in a beautiful older woman with a mysterious past. Unknown to 21-year-old Lady Windermere, Mrs. Erlynne is really her divorced mother who for 20 years has been presumed dead. Lord Windermere is merely hoping to ease the older woman's re entrance into society, which she attempts under a pseudonym, so that she may be reunited with her daughter. In a fit of pique, Lady Windermere goes to the rooms of her ardent admirer, Lord Darlington. Mrs. Erlynne

follows closely, saving her daughter from scandal by an act of generosity that ruins her own chances.

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