

Life Sucks.

Side 1: MRS. PADGETT, OSCAR, and LILLIE

MRS. PADGETT

(Taking papers from her purse:) I'm Lady Bracknell and my niece, Gwendolyn— *(To LILLIE:)* a wonderful role for you darling—

OSCAR

(Looking at LILLIE:) Thank you.

MRS. PADGETT

—my niece, Gwendolyn, has decided that she will only marry a man whose...let me see here...whose profession is that of a banker, correct?

OSCAR.

You've stated it perfectly.

MRS. PADGETT

It's important that he be a banker...

OSCAR

Yes.

MRS. PADGETT

Well...

OSCAR.

(Taking his script:) I'll read Jack...let's begin just after my proposal of marriage to Gwendolyn. *(Pointing to Mrs. Padgett's script:)* "Mr. Worthing!" We'll start there.

MRS. PADGETT

She's just a gorgon, isn't she? I love her! *(OSCAR gets down on bended knee before LILLIE.)*

MRS. PADGETT

“Mr. Worthing! Rise, sir, from this semi-recumbent posture. It is most indecorous.”

LILLIE

“Mamma! I must beg you to retire. Mr. Worthing has not quite finished yet.”

MRS. PADGETT

“Finished what, may I ask?”

LILLIE

“I am engaged to Mr. Worthing, mamma.”

MRS. PADGETT

“Pardon me, you are not engaged to anyone. When you do become engaged to some one, I, or your father, should his health permit, will inform you of the fact. An engagement should come on a young girl as a surprise, pleasant or unpleasant, as the case may be—”

(The doorbell chimes.)

Side 2: WATSON and HOLMES

WATSON

So we have gained nothing from this evening's adventure?

HOLMES

On the contrary. I have gained Mrs. Langtry's confidence and, I think perhaps, her regard. It was not possible for me to take the necklace without her consent; therefore, my mission now is to gain that consent. She must hand me—or the Crown—that necklace of her own free will.

WATSON

How on earth will you get her to do that? You heard her—"it belongs to me."

HOLMES

I didn't say it would be easy. It is going to be a delicate task—and one I am not sure I will relish completing. I will be forced to resort to a piece of trickery which I find, at this point, wholly unappetizing. (Pause.) Well, onward. We must deal with the awesome piece of the puzzle we were handed tonight—we now know with whom we're dealing. (He begins to gather his costume, handing it off to WATSON.)

WATSON

We do?!

HOLMES

You have heard me speak of Professor Moriarty?

WATSON

The famous scientific criminal.

HOLMES

In calling Moriarty a criminal you are uttering libel in the eyes of the law. (Spoken in a kind of trance of fascination:.) The greatest schemer of all time, the organizer of every deviltry, the controlling brain of the underworld, a brain which might have made or

marred the destiny of nations—that's the man! He is the Napoleon of crime, Watson. He is the organizer of half that is evil and of nearly all that is undetected in this great city. He is a genius, a philosopher, an abstract thinker. He sits motionless, like a spider in the center of its web, but that web has a thousand radiations, and he knows well every quiver of each of them. He does little himself. He only plans— but what plans! The only chink in his armor—and our only hope to defeat him—is his use of emissaries that are not his equal.

Side 3: MORIARTY and SMYTHE

MORIARTY

You confounded idiot!!

SMYTHE

What could I do?! Stay there and be burned alive?

MORIARTY

You should have followed the plan! Collected the ransom and then left!

SMYTHE

I couldn't, there was some old cow there that kept asking me questions.

MORIARTY

What "old cow"?

SMYTHE

Gertrude...something.

MORIARTY

Gertrude Padgett?

SMYTHE

That's it.

MORIARTY

Let me correct myself. You are not a "confounded idiot." You are a BLITHERING MORON! I had Roddick watching Gertrude Padgett's house all day. She never left. She was febrile and confined to her bed.

SMYTHE

She was there I tell you! I saw her.

MORIARTY

You saw an impostor! (*SMYTHE takes a piece of toffee from his pocket and begins to unwrap it.*)

SMYTHE

You know, I've grown a little tired of the way you treat me.

MORIARTY

Have you.

SMYTHE

In fact, I'm not sure I want to go on with this.

MORIARTY

You'll go on until the job is done.

SMYTHE

Why should I?

MORIARTY

Why? First, you accepted the job. Second, you need the money. (*SMYTHE puts the toffee to his mouth.*) Third, I wouldn't eat that toffee if I were you.

SMYTHE

Why not?

MORIARTY

Take a good look at it. (*He does.*)

SMYTHE

I don't see anything.

MORIARTY

A minute perforation at one end? (*SMYTHE takes out his pen knife and opens the toffee.*)

SMYTHE

What's this powder?

MORIARTY

What do you suppose it might be, Mr. Smythe?

SMYTHE

(*Realizing:*) I almost ate this on the way here!

MORIARTY

But you didn't. You're more predictable than the rising sun. (*A loud buzzer sounds. MORIARTY picks up a kind of listening device, then unbolts the door.*) Should you think of leaving my employ before you have been dismissed, bear in mind that you will feel the full force of my this pleasure at the most unexpected moment.