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Contains: *Breast Expansion as Weight Gain, Stuffing*

Filling Out Figures in Fiction

The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde

ALGERNON: [To Gwendolen.] Dear me, you are smart!

GWENDOLEN: I am always smart! Am I not, Mr. Worthing?

JACK: You're quite perfect, Miss Fairfax.

GWENDOLEN: Oh! I hope I am not that. It would leave no room for developments, and I intend to develop in many directions.

Once the objections of her mother, Lady Bracknell, were assuaged, Gwendolen Fairfax's engagement to Earnest John (Jack) Worthing was settled. The date of their union was fixed at six months hence. With her future thus established, Miss Fairfax made her daily schedule full with the planning of her wedding. To Lady Bracknell's dismay, the felicity of her engagement seemed to have elevated her daughter's appetite threefold.

"Gwendolen," Lady Bracknell said, "Unless I miss my count, which I have not, that is your fifth scone of the morning."

"Yes, mother?"

"I am merely concerned, child. Mister Worthing may find some excuse to call off your nuptials if he finds you've grown plump during your engagement. Young men these days have quite the preoccupation with the superficial, you know."

Gwendolen set down her egg spoon, silently thankful that the number of eggs she'd devoured that morning as well had gone unnoticed—or at least, un-remarked-upon. "I am not a child, mother. I am nearly one and twenty. A married woman in spirit if not

yet in name. I am fully capable of deciding my own menu.”

Lady Bracknell inclined her head and returned to her reading. “Very well.”

A high-profile engagement such as that between Earnest Worthing and Miss Fairfax—to say nothing of the coinciding engagement of Mister Algernon Moncrieff to Mister Worthing’s ward, Miss Cecily Cardew—carried with it an obligation of conspicuous participation in society. As the weeks of her courtship progressed, Gwendolen’s figure became an increasing topic of hushed conversation at balls, salons, and sundry gatherings both in town and in the country.

“Algie,” Cecily demurred, rolling her tongue around the dissatisfying name, “Do you find Miss Fairfax’s carriage to be somewhat altered of late?”

Algernon frowned slightly. He glanced across the parlor at Gwendolen, whose low-cut blue gown showed no small amount of décolletage. The pale, voluptuous flesh that would have been completely covered by the styles of last season drew his eyes like a magnet. Fearing recrimination and jealousy from his betrothed, Algernon decided tact was the best tack. “I know little of women’s fashion, my dear. Is her gown of a new style from Paris?”

“I would not stoop to calling it Parisian,” Cecily said, “But the cut *is* rather scandalous. I love my dear Gwendolen like a sister, but I had not realized she was quite so... developed.”

Algernon swallowed a lump in his throat. “Indeed? I suppose some might say so. Upon my word, she does not hold a candle to your comeliness, dear one.”

Cecily’s eyes glimmered. “Oh, Algie...”

While not engaged in conversation or performing the requisite dances, Gwendolen occupied herself with more than a few visits to the hors d’oeuvres table.

A skinny redheaded maid hauled on the cinches of Gwendolen’s corset. “Apologies, Miss,” Lucy said, “I dinna think it’s gonna close.”

"Are you suggesting I've gained weight, Lucy?" Gwendolen asked with a self-satisfied smirk.

The maid put a hand on the stays covering Gwendolen's waist, as trim as ever. "It isn't down here, Miss, but... erm..."

In the mirror, both women studied Gwendolen's reflection. Despite the corset being unlaced at the top half dozen eyelets, Lady Fairfax's prodigious bosom visibly exceeded the undergarment's capacity. Inches of porcelain-white flesh overflowed the corset; it was as if she'd been poured into it and forgotten to say "when."

"I fear I may need to pay a call on Angelique," Gwendolen said, referring to the local seamstress. "For the time being, fetch some longer cording, please, Lucy."

Running her hands along her narrow waist, Gwendolen felt the press of the half-done corset cinching her stomach. "And pray, leave the lower half a bit loose."

"Loose, Miss?" Lucy asked, raising a ginger eyebrow.

"Just a bit snug should do. I daresay my waist will draw few eyes, and I'm planning on a hearty luncheon."

"Aye, Miss, of course."

Gwendolen twisted and turned, puffing up with pride as she studied her reflection. As the overtaxed corset creaked in protest, she reached for another lemon cake from the platter on her bureau.

"Good evening, Your Ladyship!" Cecily Cardew flitted up to Lady Bracknell, providing a moment's blessed diversion. She'd been engaged in watching her over-upholstered daughter plucking cakes from the sideboard while managing—with some effort—to keep a scowl from her lips.

"Good evening, Miss Cardew."

"Your daughter is looking particularly smart of late," Cecily remarked. Her eyes roamed over Gwendolen's ostentatious curves, and her brow furrowed.

Lady Bracknell made a tight smile. "Thank you, Miss Cardew, you're too kind."

“Not at all, Lady Bracknell. And what a singular bustle she’s wearing. Is the fashion trending smaller at last?”

Lady Bracknell could not, in polite society, confess to Miss Cecily Cardew that the hind skirts of her daughter’s gown were shaped by no bustle at all. The lower curves of Gwendolen’s silhouette were no dressmaker’s padding or wire cage but were comprised of naught but her own sinful flesh.

“I think not, my dear,” Lady Bracknell said haughtily. “Likely, her maid installed it incorrectly. On my word, I’d let the creature go if it weren’t such a dreadful nuisance, training a new lady’s maid.”

Cecily grimaced, “Of course, Your Ladyship.”

Both young and elderly aristocrats observed Gwendolen taking a seat beside her betrothed. Instead of collapsing behind her back as a proper bustle should, Lady Fairfax appeared to sit on the shape under her skirt. Her head sat rather higher than it once had—her eyeline nearly equal to that of her betrothed.

“If you’ll forgive my impertinence, Lady Bracknell,” Cecily breathed, “Your Gwendolen seems to be... blooming... by the day.”

“Quite so,” the Lady said. Her chin raised a fraction as she puffed up her own carriage. “I have always said my Gwendolen was a rare beauty.”

The flow of insincere compliments and backhanded remarks passing through Lady Bracknell’s ears only increased as the date of her daughter’s union drew near.

“Young Gwendolen is looking quite healthy, Lady Bracknell.”

“Your daughter must be keeping poor Angelique quite busy.”

“It must be a great comfort to know they shan’t need a wet nurse when the time comes.”

The whispers and comments she wasn’t meant to overhear were even worse.

“I didn’t think boning could bend so far. Do you suppose she has a second corset for the upper half?”

“Miss Fairfax has a remarkable appetite. One wonders if the Lady Bracknell is feeding her at home.”

“Isn’t Miss Gwendolen’s figure scandalous? Indeed, I’ve not seen Cupid’s kettledrums that size even among the poorer classes.”

At last, the blessed day arrived. As it was a double wedding, the assembled guests did not fail to pay appropriate compliments to Miss Cecily Cardew’s comeliness. Nevertheless, they could not help but gape and gasp at the sight of Miss Gwendolen Fairfax.

“You must be quite happy, Lady Bracknell, at a successful match? And how clever indeed of Gwendolen to eschew a high-collared wedding gown.”

“My dear one,” Algernon said, “Do you intend to spend the entire day scowling?”

“I can’t help it, Algie,” Cecily grumbled. “Just look at the shape of her!”

Algernon took a slow, shuddering breath. “Now that you mention it, darling, she is looking rather... robust. It’s quite conspicuous, flagrant even, is it not?”

“Just so! It’s entirely improper for a woman of Miss Fairfax’s youth and station to reach such a size. I daresay she’d fall over if she weren’t so... balanced out...”

“Whatever can you mean, Cecily?” Algernon pitched his voice *sotto voce*, “Do you mean to say... that’s not a bustle?”

“See how it moves, Algie. There is naught but Gwendolen beneath those skirts.”

Hearing the words escaping her own mouth, Cecily gasped, reaching to shield Algernon’s eyes with her gloved hand.

Jack sat perched on the bed’s edge, one heel tapping as he waited. At last, Gwendolen returned, wearing only a thin chemise and a silk dressing gown. Jack snapped to attention faster than a fresh Cadet. His eyes were wide as he took in the sight of his bride.

“Well, my dear Earnest, I hope you are not too disappointed...?”

Words caught a moment in Jack’s throat. “I... beg your pardon?”

“I did warn you I planned on developing,” Gwendolen looked down at the plump roundness protruding from her ribs, each breast half again larger than her head. “And it’s not escaped my notice that trim figures have been coming back into fashion since last season.”

Jack’s mouth fell open. “My dear, how can you speak such things?”

“Does that mean,” She tilted her head and bent her hips to catch sight of her tiny feet, far below her billowing curves, “You are pleased with my appearance?”

“Truly, my one, whatever your appearance, I should only be heard extolling your beauty.”

Gwendolen’s tongue clicked, and she folded her arms under her bosom. Jack stared as the round swells seemed to rise like puff pastries being plumped with creme.

“However,” Jack said, clearing his throat, “Were we strangers on the road, you would no doubt catch me gawking at the sight of your figure like a peasant taking his first trip to Paris.”

“Glad I am to hear it, Earnest,” Gwendolen said with a pleased smile, lightly brushing her hips through the translucent chemise.

“If I may be bold...” Jack began.

Gwendolen’s eyes glittered. “Oh yes, be bold, be quite bold!”

“When we were introduced, I called you smart. In all sincerity, the loveliest woman in my acquaintance.”

“And now...?” She turned slowly, providing her husband a thorough perspective of her luscious swells.

“And in the course of our engagement—though I should not have thought it possible—you’ve grown more lovely by the day.”

“With emphasis on ‘grown’?” Gwendolen asked, patting her voluminous hips as a shifting of shoulders sent her bosom quaking.

Jack swallowed again. "Ah, erm, indeed."

His wife stepped closer, and his head filled with the scent of her: rose and lilac, with hints of sugar from their wedding cake. She took both his hands in hers, clutching them to her heart. "Tell me, my darling Earnest, of my developments, which direction is your favorite?"

She drew his hands down to rest on her warm hips. They'd grown to nearly a handsbreadth past the span of her shoulders. Gwendolen quivered at the touch of Jack's hands on her body. Nothing separated their skin but a single layer of satin. "Lateral...?"

Sliding his hands around her hips, Lady Fairfax leaned into her husband. She felt his desire pressed against her trim belly, and her chest filled the space between her chin and his ribs. Jack found himself gripping nearly as much flesh as his wife pressed against him. She asked, "Posterior...?"

Gwendolen was visibly trembling now. Without pulling away from her husband, she drew his hands upward to rest on each side of her luxuriant bosom. The chemise still separated their skin, but Jack need only move his fingers a half-inch, and the garment would shed to reveal his wife in all her nude glory. "Or anterior?"

Her voice had become a trembling whisper as her body responded to his touch. His voice was similarly faint when he spoke. "My own dearest one, I cannot possibly say."

Her lips made a petulant bow.

"How could I possibly decide between a singular rose and a brilliant sunset? A champion mare and the gilded carriage she pulls?"

"Earnest... did you just compare my... bosom... to a *horse*?"

Jack froze for a moment, and then Gwendolen shifted, creating a delicious scatter of friction between their bodies.

"I love all your developments, my dear," Jack said.

She rose on her toes to kiss him, and they spoke no more for several long minutes. When they parted, faces flushed and panting, Gwendolen said, "You are too kind, my husband."

“Not at all, wife. You’ve made me the envy of my peers.” His hands traveled her body as it billowed and swerved beneath his touch. “Full glad am I that you developed so well.”

Gwendolen took his face in her hands, kissing his lower lip. “Dearest one, I fear I must make a correction to your grammar.”

“Oh?”

“Your error is the use of the past tense.”

Jack’s eyes grew large as realization spread over his features. “Then... perhaps we should call down for an evening repast?”

“That is a capital idea!” She breathed, then pressed herself to him more tightly. “May we, perchance, fulfill our marital duties first, husband?”

Jack slipped the straps from her shoulders, drinking in the sight of her bare skin. “With great pleasure, my wife.”