1. **Lady Windermere and Duchess of Paisley (and Arthur)**

**Windermere:** No, my dear, you are thinking of Mrs Chevely. Early in life she discovered the important truth that nothing looks so like innocence as an indiscretion, and by a series of reckless escapades, half of them quite harmless, she had acquired all the privileges of a personality. She has more than once changed her husband. Indeed, Debrett credits her with three marriages, but as she had never changed her lover, the world has long ago ceased to talk scandal about her.

**Duchess:** She has such golden hair. Not that pale straw colour that nowadays usurps the gracious name of gold, but such gold as is woven into sunbeams or hidden in strange amber.

**Windermere:** Indeed! They say that when her second husband died her hair turned quite gold. It certainly changed its colour. From what cause I, of course, cannot say.

**Duchess:** But you say she was married three times? She must have been very young the first time.

**Windermere:** She professes to forty years of age, though I have it on good authority that she was thirty years of age for over five. **(Then, suddenly…)** Where is my cheiromantist?

**Duchess:** Your what, Gladys?

**Windermere:** My cheiromantist, Duchess. **(She goes over to the desk and rings the bell)** I can't live without him at present.

**Duchess:** A chiropodist at this hour?

**Windermere:** Not chiropodist, my dear. Cheiromantist.

**Duchess: (Not knowing what this is)** Dear Gladys! You are always so original.

**Windermere:** He comes to see my hand twice a week regularly and is most interesting about it.

**Duchess:** Good heavens!

**Windermere:** I must certainly introduce him to you.

**Duchess: (Rising)** Introduce him! You don't mean to say he is here?

**Windermere:** Of course he is here, I would not dream of going to a party without him. He tells me I have a pure psychic hand, and that if my thumb had been the least little bit shorter, I should have been a confirmed pessimist, and gone into a convent.

**Duchess: (Sitting again, relieved)** Oh, I see! He tells fortunes, I suppose?

**Windermere:** And misfortunes, too, any amount of them. Next year, for instance, I am in great danger, both by land and sea, so I am going to live in a balloon, and draw up my dinner in a basket every evening. It is all written down on my little finger, or on the palm of my hand, I forget which.

**Duchess:** But surely that is tempting Providence, Gladys.

**Windermere:** My dear Duchess, surely Providence can resist temptation by this time. I think everyone should have their hands told once a month, so as to know what not to do. Of course, one does it all the same, but it is so pleasant to be warned. Now, if someone doesn't go and fetch Mr Podgers at once, I shall have to go myself.

**Arthur: (Rising)** Let me go, Lady Windermere.

**Windermere:** Why Lord Arthur, I had quite forgotten that you were there.

**Arthur:** That is unfortunate, Lady Windermere. I had rather be ignored than forgotten.

**Windermere:** Indeed? Then in future, Lord Arthur, I shall endeavour to ignore you. As for Mr Podgers, I thank you for your offer, Lord Arthur, but I am afraid you would not recognise him.

**Arthur:** If he is as wonderful as you say, Lady Windermere, I could not possibly miss him. Tell me what he is like, and I'll bring him to you at once.

**Windermere:** Well, he is not a bit like a cheiromantist. I mean he is not mysterious, or esoteric, or romantic-looking. He is a little, stout man, with a funny, bald head, and great gold-rimmed spectacles - something between a family doctor and a country attorney. I'm really very sorry, but it is not my fault. People are so annoying. All my pianists look exactly like poets, and all my poets look exactly like pianists.

**Duchess:** I have simply worshipped pianists. I don't know what it is about them. Perhaps it is that they are foreigners. They all are, aren’t they? Even those that are born in England become foreigners after a time, don't they? It is so clever of them, and such a compliment to art. Makes it quite cosmopolitan, doesn't it?