



Candida

George Bernard Shaw, adapted by LAMDA

Marchbanks is a strange, shy poet who is in love with Candida, the wife of Reverend Morell. Candida is fifteen years his senior, but Marchbanks firmly believes that his love is reciprocated. In this speech, Marchbanks decides to challenge Morell's marriage.

MARCHBANKS: I must speak to you. There is something that must be settled between us. *(Passionately.)* Now. Before you leave this room.

(He retreats a few steps, and stands as if to bar Morell's way to the door.)

Don't look at me in that self-complacent way. You think yourself stronger than I am; but I shall stagger you if you have a heart in your breast.

First—

I love your wife.

(Morell recoils, and, after staring at him for a moment in utter amazement, bursts into uncontrollable laughter. Marchbanks is taken aback, but not disconcerted; and he soon becomes indignant and contemptuous.)

Do you think that the things people make fools of themselves about are any less real and true than the things they behave sensibly about? *(Morell's gaze wavers.)* They are more true: they are the only things that are true. You are very calm and sensible and moderate with me because you can see that I am a fool about your wife; just as no doubt that old man who was here just now is very wise over your socialism, because he sees that YOU are a fool about it. *(Morell's perplexity deepens markedly. Marchbanks follows up his advantage, playing him fiercely with questions.)* Does that prove you wrong? Does your complacent superiority to me prove that I am wrong? I told you I should stagger you.

(Morell advances on him threateningly.)

(Shrinking back.) Let me alone. Don't touch me. Stop, Morell. I won't bear it. *(Almost in hysterics.)* I'm not afraid of you: it's you who are afraid of me. You think I shrink from being brutally handled – because *(With tears in his voice.)* I can do nothing but cry with rage when I am met with violence – because I can't lift a heavy trunk down from the top of a cab like you – because I can't fight you for your wife as a navvy would: all that makes you think that I'm afraid of you. But you're wrong.

(Morell, angered, turns on him again. Marchbanks flies to the door in involuntary dread.)

Let me alone, I say. I'm going. Tell her what I said. If you don't tell her, I will: I'll write to her. She will understand me, and know that I understand her.

Act 1