

An Improbable Life
By
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FADE IN:

EXT. TITE STREET, CHELSEA, LONDON - DAY

SUPER: APRIL, 1893

Light rain on a quiet street. Pedestrians under umbrellas.

A flamboyantly dressed OSCAR WILDE (38) at a desk by the window of a modern Victorian house.

INT. WILDE'S HOUSE - LIBRARY

Wilde scribbles frantically on paper. The muffled play of children sifts through the door.

As two young boys burst through the door, Wilde lays down his pen.

Wilde's agitated face is replaced by a grin at the sight of CYRIL (8) and Vyvyan (7).

A boyishly-pretty CONSTANCE Wilde (34) dashes into the room.

CONSTANCE

Boys. Your father's trying to work.

The boys rummage the desk.

WILDE

There's nothing there.

VYVYAN

But Father, mum said you were working.

He taps the manuscript under his arm.

CYRIL

Can we read it?

VYVYAN

Can we, Father?

Wilde shakes his head grimly. The boys heads drop. Constance smiles.

WILDE

But you can listen.

Both leap onto his lap.

CONSTANCE

I'll make tea.

Cyril settles his head on his father's shoulder. Vyvyan mimics the action.

WILDE

This is the story of The Remarkable Rocket.

Wilde theatrically clears his throat, snaps the pages.

WILDE

"The King's son was going to be married, so there were general rejoicings. He had waited a whole year for his bride, and at last she had arrived. She was a Russian princess...."

A broad smile across Vyvyan's face.

INT. KITCHEN

Constance prepares tea. She hums.

WILDE (V.O.)

"How very fortunate it is for the King's son," he remarked, "that he is to be married on the very day which I am to be let off. Really, if it had been arranged beforehand, it could not have turned out better for him; but Princes are always lucky."

A round and stern MAID takes over making tea. Constance fades back.

WILDE (V.O.)

"Dear me!" Said the little Squib, "I thought it was quite the other way, and that we were to be let off in the Prince's honor."

A faint KNOCK. Constance brushes hands across her skirt and drifts out of the kitchen.

INT. FOYER

Constance opens the door to a COURIER.

COURIER

Good day, madam. I did not wish to disturb Mr. Wilde.

(gestures to window)

But could you see he gets this at the earliest convenience?

The courier passes an envelope with an authoritative seal.

CONSTANCE

Yes. Of course.

She fishes her pocket.

COURIER

No, madam. I have been recompensed.

The tea kettle WHISTLES.

INT. HALL/STUDY

Constance waits outside the door. The maid struggles with the weight of an ornate tea set.

WILDE (O.S.)

"I knew I should create a great sensation," gasped the rocket, and went out.

CYRIL (O.S.)

Read it again!

Constance enters. The maid prepares two cups of tea.

CONSTANCE

Boys. Go into the garden to play.

They hop off Wilde's lap in unison but he holds onto them, kisses both on their heads and playfully swats their behinds.

CYRIL

Bye, Papa.

VYVYAN

Bye, Father.

The maid leaves with the boys. Constance hands Wilde the envelope.

WILDE
 (looking at the seal)
 Praise from an official admirer?

CONSTANCE
 I wouldn't think so.

Constance sits on the arm of his chair, brushes fingers through his hair. Wilde stoically opens the letter.

CONSTANCE
 Another?

WILDE
 Just a request, that's all.

CONSTANCE
 Oscar, we must adjust to our circumstances.

WILDE
 It is only by not paying one's bills that one can hope to live in the memory of the commercial classes.

CONSTANCE
 I'm not one of your sycophants. Be serious.

WILDE
 Oh, but I am.

She turns away. He strokes her cheek.

WILDE
 I shall write a letter. To explain our situation.

INT. COLLECTION OFFICE - DAY

A plump, self-important COLLECTION AGENT shuffles papers behind a massive desk.

The office is impeccably furnished and sterile.

He ignores the courier waiting patiently.

COLLECTION AGENT
 (without looking up)
 You delivered them all?

COURIER
 Yes, sir.

COLLECTION AGENT
And you imparted the importance of
compliance?

COURIER
Yes. To all sir.

COLLECTION AGENT
Good.

COURIER
Except....

The agent finally looks at the courier.

COLLECTION AGENT
Except?

The courier fidgets.

COLLECTION AGENT
Out with it, man!

COURIER
Except Mr. Wilde, sir. I gave it to his
missus.

The agent slams his fist, upsetting papers.

COLLECTION AGENT
I told you specifically to address the
man yourself.

COURIER
He was busy, sir. With his children.

The agent pushes away from his desk, incensed.

COLLECTION AGENT
Well. We certainly can't inconvenience
Mr. Wilde, can we? Not with such a
trivial matter as his responsibilities.
Not that he would ever....

A KNOCK on the door brings the agent out of his rant.

COLLECTION AGENT
What!

COURIER 2 stands at the threshold.

COURIER 2
A correspondence, sir.

COLLECTION AGENT
Well, is it to deliver itself, or will
you bring it to me?

Courier 2 moves quickly to the agent.

COLLECTION AGENT
What is this?

COURIER 2
I'm sure I wouldn't know, sir.

The agent studies the flowery handwriting and return
address. He smiles smugly.

COLLECTION AGENT
Well. That was short notice. The missus
must have cracked the whip.

The agent pulls a letter opener from his desk and neatly
slices the envelope.

A single PENNY falls from the envelope and rolls across
the desk.

He rends the envelope. Empty. He lets out a ROAR.

EXT. BOND STREET

Through the window the agent continues to rant. The city
drowns his tirade.

Wilde giggles and walks off.

An effete teenage boy exits a carriage. Wilde pauses. The
boy helps his mother down the step.

Wilde sniffs his carnation and hurries into a toy store.

INT. WILDE'S HOUSE, PLAYROOM - DAY

Cyril and Vyvyan play war; their castles on opposite
sides of the room. Lead toy soldiers line the walls.

They assault soldiers with peas shot from spoons.

WILDE (O.S.)
(in a cockney accent)
Oy. Fresh milk. Fresh milk I say.
Straight from the cow. Git ya fresh milk.

Vyvyan stops mid-shot. Cyril and Vyvyan smile at each other. The sound of metal wheels gets closer. As the door opens Vyvyan shoots Cyril between the eyes.

WILDE

Oy, me lads. Git ya milk.

Wilde pushes a miniature milk cart harnessed to a horse. Cyril mobs the toy; strokes fur. Vyvyan tackles Wilde.

WILDE

Oh, help me. Help me. The street urchins,
they've nicked me horse.

Cyril pushes the cart full speed around the room back to Wilde.

Vyvyan plays with one of the milk jugs; the lid loosens. Wilde grabs the other jug and screws off the top.

WILDE

Excellent...wait a tic.

Wilde runs out.

WILDE (O.S.)

We'll do this up proper.

The boys fight over the toy.

CYRIL

As the oldest, I have first turn.

VYVYAN

That's not fair. You'll always be the
oldest.

CYRIL

Exactly.

VYVYAN

We could share.

Cyril stops pulling on the horse. Looks Vyvyan square in the eyes. Smiles.

CYRIL

No.

Cyril pulls the horse away.

Wilde enters the room holding a bottle of milk. He pours it into the jugs, grabs the reins and tears around the room sloshing milk.

WILDE

Oh, me word. I got me a runaway horse.

Vyvyan takes the cart for a run.

VYVYAN

He's fast as a stallion.

CYRIL

Me next!

Wilde waves his hat like a cowboy.

WILDE

Yee-haw!

INT. STAIRWELL/HALLWAY

MUFFLED SCREAMS. The Maid struggles up the steps and waddles along the hall.

INT. PLAYROOM BAR

The Maid bursts into the room.

MAID

What is the matter with you two?

Vyvyan stops abruptly with the cart, spilling milk. Wilde stops mid-buck with Cyril as his rider.

MAID

Mr. Wilde! Are you the cause of this uproar?

Wilde winks at Vyvyan. He places his hand over his heart.

WILDE

Guilty as charged.

The Maid hesitates in chiding him further.

MAID

(apologetically)

The noise has Mrs. Wilde quite at wits end. She would like it stopped immediately.

Cyril climbs from Wilde's back. Wilde removes his hat and bows lowly from a kneeling position.

WILDE

Inform our dear lady we shall most obediently follow her orders.

The Maid shakes her head and waddles to the door. Wilde pulls a face. The boys CACKLE. The Maid turns to find all three Wildes looking innocent.

She mutters as she closes the door. The Wildes fall into a pile, laughing.

Wilde leans against a bench gasping from laughter. He motions the boys to him. Each lies against a shoulder.

WILDE

Did I ever tell you the story of The Selfish Giant?

CYRIL

Yes.

VYVYAN

Yes.

They all laugh again. Wilde pulls them closer.

WILDE

Good. Then I'll tell you again.

INT. DRAWING ROOM

Constance reads curled in a chair by the window. A light breeze lifts the sheers.

The Maid enters the room chuckling.

MAID

I don't know what you'll do with those three boys of yours. But at least they're quiet now.

Constance smiles and turns a page. The Maid fluffs a pillow and places it behind her back.

MAID

I think your oldest is the worst of the bunch.

CONSTANCE

Mr. Wilde does get a bit carried away.

The Maid laughs and arranges some flowers.

MAID

He thinks he's one of the boys sometimes. It's quite charming, really.

CONSTANCE

Yes. To a fault.

MAID

That new toy is beautiful. Quite authentic looking.

CONSTANCE

I'm sure. Nothing but the best for his princes. Regardless of the sacrifice.

INT. PLAYROOM

Vyvyan drowns on Wilde's lap. Cyril raptly listens to his father.

Wilde's voice booms within the enclosed room.

WILDE

"Who hath dared to wound thee?" cried the Giant; "tell me, that I may take my big sword and slay him."

"Nay!" answered the child; "but these are wounds of love."

Wilde strokes Vyvyan's hair.

WILDE

"Who art thou?" said the Giant, and a strange awe fell on him, and he knelt before the little child. And the child smiled on the Giant, and said to him, "You let me play once in your garden, today you shall come with me to my garden, which is Paradise." And when the children ran in that afternoon, they found the Giant lying dead under the tree, all covered with white blossoms."

Vyvyan breathes heavily. Cyril holds Wilde's hand.

CYRIL

Papa. Why do you always get tears in your eyes when you tell that story?

WILDE

Beautiful things always make me cry.

Vyvyan smiles in his sleep.

EXT. SEASIDE - DAY

A long, complex castle. Vyvyan, Oscar and Cyril barefoot with jackets and knickerbockers.

Wilde digs a tunnel. Vyvyan cheers as water flows into the moat. Cyril hangs flags on towers.

Wilde admires his work.

WILDE

Not bad. I would have to say the work of Wilde & Sons is paramount among castle builders.

Vyvyan and Cyril join Wilde.

VYVYAN

It's beautiful, Father.

Cyril cocks his head. He chews his lip.

WILDE

Do you approve, Master Cyril?

CYRIL

There seems to be something missing.

Wilde studies the castle.

WILDE

I don't see how there could be. Anything more would be pure ornament.

Cyril winks at Vyvyan.

VYVYAN

Oh, yes. Yes! There is something missing.

Wilde looks between the boys, perplexed. He puts hands in his jacket. His face brightens.

WILDE

I believe you're right. An unoccupied castle would be most disheartening.

He discovers lead soldiers in his pocket. Cyril and Vyvyan line the walls with soldiers.

WILDE

Remarkably better.

Cyril strips and runs into the water. Vyvyan giggles, strips and joins Cyril.

CYRIL

Come on, Papa.

Wilde strips to his underwear and dives into the water. Cyril splashes him and Vyvyan jumps onto his back.

VYVYAN

Any fish in the water, Father?

WILDE

I'm sure there are.

CYRIL

With large teeth.

Cyril growls. Vyvyan pulls his legs out of the water.

VYVYAN

(half-jokingly)

Any sea monsters?

WILDE

Oh, I shouldn't think so. Not at this time of year, it's too hot. They'd be vacationing farther north. The Irish Sea, I should guess.

He smiles wickedly at Vyvyan.

WILDE

Unless you count me.

Wilde ROARS. Vyvyan SCREAMS and falls into the water. Wilde chases the boys, SNARLING.

EXT. SHORE LINE - LATER

Wilde, Cyril and Vyvyan dry in the sea grass, clothes strewn around them. Water breaches the castle; bits chip and fall into the spray.

WILDE

Did I ever tell you about the great melancholy carp near our family's house?

The boys shake their heads.

WILDE

That carp never moved from the bottom unless I called him with Irish songs I learned from your grandfather.

VYVYAN

Will you show us the carp one day?

WILDE

Yes, when I take you home. You'll have to learn the songs though.

CYRIL

What if he's dead?

WILDE

Oh, I shouldn't think he would be. Those carps live hundreds of years. Maybe even thousands.

VYVYAN

Can you teach us the song?

INT. BEACH HOUSE - EVENING

Constance reads on the couch. The sound of SINGING and loud steps on the wooden porch.

Wilde enters singing in Gaelic. The boys hum. Vyvyan and Cyril are fully dressed, but Wilde is still in underwear, clothes draped on his arm.

CONSTANCE

(without looking up)

Did you summon the carp?

WILDE

No. He seemed a bit reticent today.

Constance begins to speak before she looks up.

CONSTANCE

I should think your caterwaul...my God, Oscar, did you walk all the way from the beach in your underwear?

The boys giggle.

CONSTANCE

Well, at least the boys had the good sense and decorum to dress.

Wilde puffs out his chest.

WILDE

I don't yield to pedestrian minds.

Constance stands and takes his arm.

CONSTANCE

In London maybe, but this is Worthing.
Come, let's get you dressed; supper is
almost ready.

INT. BEACH HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Wilde and Constance eat strawberries and cream. Vyvyan
and Cyril play soldiers in the living room, visible
through the door.

CONSTANCE

We haven't seen much of Bosie lately....

WILDE

I have to go back to London in the
morning.

CONSTANCE

I should think he would have written.

WILDE

It's opening night.

CONSTANCE

You'll need to tell the boys.

WILDE

I wish I had more time.

CONSTANCE

But you'll get to see your girlfriend.

Wilde stares with a mouthful of half-eaten strawberry.

CONSTANCE

Your lovely Lillie.

Wilde smiles at her slyly.

WILDE

Are you jealous?

CONSTANCE

Do you want me to be?

WILDE

But of course. What better compliment for
a husband than a jealous wife?

CONSTANCE

Yet you aren't jealous of me.

WILDE
You're not a husband.

She smacks his arm.

CONSTANCE
You know what I mean.

Wilde holds Constance's hand.

WILDE
I couldn't be jealous of you my dear
flower, because we are of one soul.

Constance studies his face.

CONSTANCE
You better brush up on your acting before
you see your girlfriend. She knows good
acting from bad.

Constance pulls his hand to her lips. She lightly kisses
his fingers.

CONSTANCE
You will come back to me?

Wilde brushes a curl away from her face.

WILDE
My dearest Constance -- always.

A mischievous smile.

WILDE
That is your curse.

EXT. HAYMARKET THEATRE - DAY

Wilde exits a carriage. On the marquee: Oscar Wilde's A
Woman of No Importance. Lillie Langtry's title larger
than Wilde's.

Wilde hesitates only a moment, chats briefly with a
worker then enters the theatre.

INT. HAYMARKET THEATRE

Stage hands adjust props. LILLIE LANGTRY addresses her
son GERALD. Lillie is a beautiful, elegant woman on the
back edge of her prime.

LILLIE

Men don't understand what mothers are. I am no different from other women except in the wrong done me and the wrong I did, and my very heavy punishments and great disgrace. And yet, to bear you I had to look on death. To nurture you I had to wrestle with it. Death fought with me for you. All women have to fight with death to keep their children.

Wilde watches from the back of the auditorium. A brief shaft of light as a delivery boy arrives with roses.

Wilde intercepts the boy, tips him, and sends him away.

After the boy closes the door Wilde inspects the card, places it in his pocket and makes his way to the stage.

On stage, Gerald holds a glove.

GERALD

Hallo, mother, whose glove is this? You have had a visitor. Who was it?

LILLIE

(turning around)

Oh! No one. No one in particular. A man of no importance.

A smattering of CLAPS from cast and crew.

Lillie makes a flowery curtsy. Wilde tosses roses at her feet. She picks up the flowers, shields her eyes from the lights.

LILLIE

Oscar!

As Wilde steps onto the stage she jumps into his arms. He swings her in a circle then holds her at arm's length.

WILDE

My dear Lillie, as beautiful as ever.

Wilde watches Gerald as he crosses the stage.

LILLIE

You better say that. What did you think of my performance?

WILDE

You were dazzling.

LILLIE
I meant the acting.

WILDE
It is always a danger to critique pure art, and as your beauty is the truest form of art, a double danger.

LILLIE
If I'm so arresting, then why do you continue to stare at my son?

Lillie tilts her head toward the actor playing Gerald.

WILDE
I'm sure I don't know what you mean. You are the most beautiful flower in all the land.

She weaves her arm into his. She leads him backstage.

LILLIE
I suppose that's as close an answer as I can hope for.

Lillie stares at his face.

LILLIE
Have you changed the marquee yet?

Wilde stops, surprised, then laughs.

WILDE
I think they should be done by now.

EXT. HAYMARKET THEATRE - CONTINUOUS

The sign now has Wilde's name larger than Lillie's.

INT. HAYMARKET THEATRE, BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Lillie Langtry; SPHYNX, a stately woman in a red dress; MRS. HELEN CAREW; ROBBIE ROSS, REGINALD TURNER, and MORE ADEY, all in their mid 20's; JAMES WHISTLER, a middle-aged painter who looks and sounds the part of a Southern gentleman; and HERBERT TREE drink and talk amid the commotion of actors and stagehands.

Wilde theatrically enters the room.

WILDE
My beautiful friends.

They break into applause except Whistler. Wilde bows. He steps up to Sphinx.

WILDE

Sphinx. A wonder of nature as always.
Where's Earnest?

SPHYNX

At the club. He's not much for theatre.

JAMES WHISTLER

I know how he feels.

Wilde turns as if Whistler's just arrived.

WILDE

James! Still playing the part of the
southern aristocrat?

Wilde enthusiastically shakes Whistler's hand; Whistler smiles in spite of himself.

JAMES WHISTLER

We don't have titled inbreds in America.

WILDE

Not titled at least.

Robbie Ross moves quickly to Wilde and hugs him.

ROBBIE ROSS

Oscar. Your biggest success yet.

JAMES WHISTLER

Sycophants always say that.

WILDE

Pay him no mind, Robbie. Please continue
with your adoration.

MRS. HELEN CAREW

So. Am I to be ignored?

Oscar moves quickly to her side.

WILDE

Of course not my dear Mrs. Carew.

MRS. HELEN CAREW

Oh. Formal are we?

WILDE

Sorry. My dear Helen.

Wilde kisses her cheeks. Reginald Turner and More Adey step behind Mrs. Carew.

MRS. HELEN CAREW
Coleridge loves the fairy tales.

WILDE
Tell your son I'm happy....

Reginald clears his throat. Wilde shakes their hands.

WILDE
Reginald. More. The triptych is complete.
I should have known you'd be here when I
saw Robbie.

REGINALD
We couldn't have missed it.

MORE ADEY
Even if we tried.

Wilde gives More a playfully scolding look.

WILDE
More. That doesn't suit you. You are too
young to play the curmudgeon. Besides,
that's Whistler's role.

Everyone laughs except Whistler. Herbert Tree tentatively offers Wilde his hand.

HERBERT TREE
Mr. Wilde, sir, uh, may I
congratulate....

WILDE
Herbert. Who is this Mr. Wilde? I am just
Oscar.

Whistler raises his glass in a toast.

JAMES WHISTLER
Yes. To Oscar Wilde. The model of
humility.

Everyone laughs, including Wilde.

INT. THEATRE - DAY

SUPER: ONE YEAR LATER

Wilde and Vyvyan sit in a darkened theatre. Herbert Tree plays the lead in *The Emperor's New Clothes*.

Vyvyan laughs wildly as do other children around him. Wilde drapes an arm around Vyvyan and laughs also.

INT. BACKSTAGE - LATER

Herbert Tree removes makeup with a towel. He brightens when he sees Wilde.

Tree pumps Wilde's hand.

TREE

Mr...Oscar! What an absolute delight and honor that you should come see me.

WILDE

The delight was all ours, my dear Herbert. You quite captivated my son.

Wilde gestures to Vyvyan.

WILDE

Vyvyan. This is the famous actor Mr. Herbert Tree.

Tree bends to Vyvyan's height. He cautiously offers his hand. Vyvyan enthusiastically shakes it.

VYVYAN

A pleasure to meet you, sir.

Wilde beams with pride.

TREE

Uh. Yes. And a pleasure to meet you Master Vyvyan.

Tree smiles self-consciously from Wilde to Vyvyan.

TREE

Uh. So, Vyvyan. Have you seen *A Woman of No Importance*?

Wilde stifles a laugh. Tree realizes his gaff and plasters a smile to his face.

VYVYAN

Sorry sir, but no. My mother tells me the play contains certain epigrams which are not suitable for children to hear.

Tree stares, open-mouthed. Wilde bursts into laughter.

EXT. WEST END, LONDON - LATER

Wilde offers Vyvyan a coin.

VYVYAN

What is this for, Father?

WILDE

For the performance.

VYVYAN

I don't understand.

WILDE

I've never seen Tree so tongue-tied. You dissolved his mask. How ironic he can play to children, but not converse with them. You had him quite dumb-founded.

VYVYAN

I'm sorry, Father. I didn't mean to embarrass you.

Wilde stops, kneels down, and holds Vyvyan by the shoulders.

WILDE

Embarrass? Vyvyan. Banish the thought. That's quite impossible.

Wilde brushes a strand of hair from Vyvyan's face.

WILDE

You could never embarrass me. Your response was delightful. Tree will be telling that story in every house in England by end of week. That's a tremendous feat for any man. You should be happy to have your name bantered in society. The only thing worse than being talked about is not being talked about.

WHISTLER (O.S.)

Ever the philosopher.

James Whistler stands in front of them.

WHISTLER

And with a charming young charge, as usual.

WILDE

Why, Jimmy. Why didn't you write to say you were back in London?

WHISTLER

Don't you read the papers? Or do you only check to see if your name is in them?

Wilde emits a strained chuckle.

WILDE

Jimmy, my dear friend, may I present my son Vyvyan? Vyvyan, this is the genius painter James Whistler.

(under his breath)

Just ask him.

Whistler pretends not to hear, removes his hat, and offers his hand. Vyvyan shakes it.

WHISTLER

You're quite a handsome young man. I can definitely see the influence of your mother.

Wilde laughs. He shakes Whistler's hand.

WILDE

I've missed our chats, Jimmy.

WHISTLER

Of course you have. I'm the only one with enough ego to keep you honest - at least as honest as you get.

VYVYAN

Whistler? You did the drawings in our playroom, didn't you?

WHISTLER

Did I, Oscar?

WILDE

The sketches you gave me last year.

WHISTLER

Oh, yes. Nice to know they're in a place of honor.

Whistler turns his attention back to Vyvyan.

WHISTLER

On what adventure has your father taken you today, young man?

VYVYAN

We saw "*Once Upon a Time*" at the theatre.

WHISTLER

Oh, that sounds lovely. Quite domestic.

WILDE

I wouldn't say that.

WHISTLER

No. I'm sure you wouldn't, Oscar. It wouldn't suit the public persona, would it? But it does paint a sweet picture don't you think? An angelic boy with his doting father? Quite domestic.

WILDE

Not domestic, just....

WHISTLER

You shouldn't be embarrassed, Oscar.

WILDE

I'm not embarrassed....

WHISTLER

Accept my apologies.

Whistler tips his hat, cutting Wilde off before he can make a retort.

WHISTLER

I didn't mean to insult you by calling you a doting father. A pleasure to make your acquaintance, young man. Farewell, Oscar.

Whistler walks away, tapping his walking stick to an internal song. Wilde takes Vyvyan's hand and walks the opposite direction.

WILDE

That man is insufferable. Always has to have the last word.

A BOBBY disperses a crowd of young raggedy men.

Vyvyan tugs on Wilde's sleeve.

VYVYAN

Father. Why is that Bobby being mean to the boys?

The policeman overhears the comment and smiles at Vyvyan.

BOBBY

No worries, son. Just a bunch of panthers.

Vyvyan looks confused. He looks at the boys, then at the policeman.

VYVYAN

Panthers?

Wilde and the Bobby laugh.

BOBBY

Rent boys.

WILDE

They're working boys, Vyvyan.

BOBBY

That's a polite euphemism for sinners.

WILDE

The only difference between the saint and the sinner is that every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future.

A PANTHER smiles and tips an imaginary hat to Wilde.

VYVYAN

Does that *panther* know you, Father?

The Bobby chuckles.

BOBBY

I'm sure he wouldn't know a gentleman like your father.

An androgynous blond RENT BOY moves up beside Wilde.

RENT BOY

Mr. Wilde. Maybe we'll see you again soon?

WILDE

Good day, sir.

RENT BOY

Oh. Formal now, are we?

WILDE
Good day, sir!

RENT BOY
We've missed you. We've all missed....

The Bobby pushes him away.

BOBBY
Move along. All of you move along!

The rent boy laughs as he walks away. Wilde hustles Vyvyan away.

VYVYAN
Father, how does he know you?

WILDE
He doesn't.

VYVYAN
He acted like he was your friend.

WILDE
He is no friend to me.

INT. WILDE'S HOUSE, VYVYAN AND CYRIL'S BEDROOM - DAY

Cyril and Vyvyan place clothes into matching suitcases.

Cyril pulls a sock from Vyvyan's suitcase. He pours a handful of lead soldiers into the sock.

VYVYAN
Why can't we stay together?

CYRIL
You'll make friends. You'll see.

Vyvyan sits on the bed.

VYVYAN
Cyril. Father met some boys on the street. They seemed to know him, but he said he didn't know them.

CYRIL
So?

VYVYAN
They knew his name.

CYRIL

Everyone knows his name.

VYVYAN

Father called them working boys. But they didn't seem to be doing anything. Just standing on the street.

Cyril shrugs and continues packing.

VYVYAN

Why would they say they know father?

CYRIL

Everyone knows father. Or thinks they do.

VYVYAN

I didn't like it. They acted like I wasn't there.

Cyril sits next to Vyvyan.

CYRIL

People think they know father. All kinds of people. They think they are his friends - because they read one of his stories. Or saw a play. But they don't really know him. Not like we do. No one really knows father like we do.

INT. HOTEL BAR - EVENING

Wilde strides into the crowded room. Lord Douglas - BOSIE - young, blond and slight, places a hand on Wilde's arm.

BOSIE

My dear Oscar. What a pleasure.

Wilde spins.

WILDE

Bosie, my dear boy. Where have you been hiding yourself?

Bosie gestures to the Marquess of QUEENSBERRY, a stern gentleman pushing his way across the room.

BOSIE

Not far enough away, according to my father. Do be polite.

WILDE

But of course. Could I be anything else?

Bosie gives Wilde a threatening look. Wilde chuckles.

Bosie plasters a smile upon his face.

BOSIE

My dear Papa, what a delight to see you
this evening. Oscar, you remember my
father, the Marquess of Queensberry?

Queensberry stiffly nods. Bosie gestures to Wilde.

BOSIE

And you no doubt remember Oscar Wilde?

QUEENSBERRY

No doubt.

Wilde smiles broadly and offers his hand.

WILDE

And I am delighted to see you again also,
my Lord.

Wilde's hand hangs mid-air. Wilde fixes Queensberry with
a cold smile. Queensberry regards Wilde's hand as a dead
fish, then shakes it curtly; Bosie exhales in relief.

BOSIE

Now, how about a round....

QUEENSBERRY

Come with me.

Queensberry pulls Bosie away.

Bosie turns back with a sad smile. Wilde waves broadly.

INT. HOTEL BAR - LATER

A dishevelled Wilde slouches at the bar, drunk. The
remnants of a glass of green Absinthe. Bosie slides
beside him.

WILDE

(slurring)

The long, lost prodigal son.

BOSIE

Sorry. My father walked me all the way to
the hotel. He stayed in the lobby, so I
had to take the service entrance.

WILDE
Out through the in door, eh?

BOSIE
Something like that.

Wilde starts to rise from his seat.

WILDE
All's well and all that. Now let's see
that hotel room, Bosie.

Bosie grabs his arm, pulls him back into his chair.

BOSIE
Not tonight, dear Oscar. I have more
pressing news.

Wilde pulls an astonished look.

WILDE
More pressing than fleshing?

Wilde giggles.

BOSIE
Besides, you're too drunk for play.

Wilde swishes the drink.

WILDE
Absinthe makes the heart grow fonder.

BOSIE
Oscar, please. I'm serious. I have a bit
of unpleasant news.

EXT. HAYMARKET THEATRE - EVENING

A crowd snakes along the street. The marquee reads: Oscar
Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest.

Queensberry struts past waiting patrons. A beefy USHER
stops him at the door. Queensberry shows his ticket.

USHER
I'm sorry, sir. That seat's been taken.

QUEENSBERRY
Taken? What do you mean taken? The seat
has been taken by me!

The usher blocks the doorway ignoring Queensberry's dismissive wave.

QUEENSBERRY

Move, sir.

The Usher shakes his head.

QUEENSBERRY

Do you know who I am?

USHER

I'm quite aware, sir. Lord Queensberry. But as I tried to tell you, it has come to my attention that seat has been double booked. The seat is presently occupied. I understand there are general admission seats available.

He points to the long line.

QUEENSBERRY

General admission? How dare you.

(in a loud voice)

You can tell him it won't work! I'm on to him. I know his perversion!

The Usher grabs Queensberry's arm.

QUEENSBERRY

Unhand me sir!

The Usher pulls him closer and whispers in his ear.

USHER

Sir. You can leave quietly...or....

QUEENSBERRY

(pulling away)

Don't you dare....

The Usher pulls him roughly to him again.

USHER

Sir. You don't want to make a scene. Trust me. I won't use your boxing rules.

Queensberry hands the Usher a bundle of rotten vegetables.

QUEENSBERRY

Deliver this gift to Wilde.

Queensberry scuttles away. From a safe distance, he yells over his shoulder.

QUEENSBERRY

Tell Wilde he has not won!

Wilde moves out of the shadows and tips the Usher.

INT. CARDOGAN HOTEL, LOBBY - NIGHT

Wilde walks arm in arm with Bosie, both giddy, accompanied by Robbie Ross and Reginald Turner.

The handsome young CLERK hands Wilde a key and envelope.

CLERK

A gentleman left you this envelope earlier. He said it was of utmost importance you read it tonight upon the success of your opening night performance. And may I offer you my congratulations also, Mr. Wilde.

Wilde bows theatrically, and smiles broadly.

WILDE

All homage is delightful to an artist, and doubly sweet when youth brings it.

Wilde tears open the envelope, still smiling, until he opens the card.

The card reads: To Oscar Wilde, posing as sodomite. The Marquess of Queensberry.

Wilde's face changes to outrage.

BOSIE

What is it Oscar?

CLERK

Not bad news I hope.

Wilde hands the card to Bosie, who blanches.

WILDE

That was no gentleman.

Bosie hands the card to Robbie. Turner looks over his shoulder.

WILDE

That man needs a lesson in manners.

ROBBIE

Let it go, Oscar. Just let it go.

REGINALD

Yes, Oscar. Listen to Robbie. Nothing good can happen from a quarrel with Bosie's father.

BOSIE

Let it go, Reginald? That may be easy for you and Robbie to say, but this is Oscar's reputation we're talking about.

REGINALD

Bosie. The argument is between you and your father. Dragging Oscar into it won't help.

Robbie pats Turner on the shoulder.

ROBBIE

Quite right, Reggie.

Bosie looks insulted.

BOSIE

I didn't drag Oscar into this. My father did by impugning his reputation.

MONTAGE

- Wilde talks to his attorney
- Queensberry on the stand pointing at Wilde
- Wilde charmingly answers the defense's questions
- Wilde nervously answers the defense's questions

INT. CARDOGAN HOTEL - DAY

Wilde chats with his ATTORNEY, Robbie and Turner. A police SERGEANT enters with two policemen.

SERGEANT

Mr. Oscar Wilde. I have a warrant for your arrest. You have been charged with crimes of indecency.

Wilde rises, exhausted and drunk. He hands his drink to his attorney.

WILDE

Go to the theatre. Have them post bail.

Wilde directs his attention to Robbie.

WILDE

Robbie. Pay a visit to Constance for me?

Robbie nods his head. Wilde moves away quietly with a policeman holding each arm.

EXT. WEST END - DAY

Vyvyan, Cyril and Constance stroll the street.

PLACARD: OSCAR WILDE - GUILTY!

Vyvyan points to the placard.

VYVYAN

Momma. What do they mean....

Constance shoves Vyvyan's face into her body.

CONSTANCE

Shhh! It's nothing, darling. Just ignorant talk.

She ushers the boys into a cab.

INT. CAB

Cyril stares at Constance, concerned. Vyvyan to glance back at the newsstand.

INT. WILDE'S HOME - DAY

Cyril sifts through a series of papers. All headings declaring the guilt of his father. He weeps.

EXT. HAYMARKET THEATRE, WEST END, LONDON - DAY

Vyvyan and Constance pass the theatre.

A worker covers Wilde's name on the poster for The Importance of Being Earnest. Another worker removes his name from the marquee.

Constance pulls Vyvyan across the street as he points back at the theatre.

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

A store clerk sweeps books off a shelf.

EXT. DOCKSIDE - DAY

Cyril, Vyvyan and an indifferent French NANNY stand at the edge of the gangway. Constance adjusts the boys' clothes. Vyvyan cries, Cyril is stone-faced.

CONSTANCE

Be strong my warriors. Remember - you'll use my name now. Holland. Be good boys. Mind your nanny. We'll be together soon. I promise.

Constance hugs Vyvyan and Cyril tightly and slips her hand into each boy's jacket pocket.

VYVYAN

And Father?

Constance caresses his cheek.

INT. WILDE'S HOUSE, LOUNGE - DAY

Constance sits in the corner. She watches movers roughly toss books into boxes.

EXT. BOAT DECK - DAY

Vyvyan stares into the ocean spray as Cyril and the Nanny vomit over the rail.

Vyvyan dips his hand into his pocket and pulls out a toy soldier.

EXT. READING GAOL PRISON GATE - DAY

Wilde, chains on hands and legs, is led from a wagon by guards up to the imposing brick structure.

INT. BOAT - DAY

Vyvyan walks along a hallway, stumbling with the tide.

INT. READING GAOL PRISON, HALLWAY

Wilde moves slowly along the hallway, escorted past cells of hardened criminals.

INT. BOAT BOILER ROOM

Vyvyan hides along a wall of the boiler room. A worker passes the open door, glances inside, then closes the door with a BOOM.

INT. PRISON CELL

Wilde on a hard-slat wooden bed. The cell door closes with a BOOM.

INT. CAPTAIN'S CABIN - DAY

Vyvyan steps into the cabin. A seasoned CAPTAIN SYKES in the captain's seat. CO-CAPTAIN VIRGIL mans the wheel.

A Sailor, BEAR, monstrously large with missing teeth, moves quickly toward Vyvyan.

BEAR

Aye, boy. Ye ain't allowed in here.

Vyvyan backs into the door and reaches for the handle without looking away from Bear.

The Captain smiles at Vyvyan.

CAPTAIN SYKES

I thought you weren't coming.

Bear and Vyvyan freeze, confused.

CAPTAIN SYKES

Come here, boy. Doesn't look good showing up late to your first shift.

Vyvyan moves cautiously past Bear. The captain steers him into the seat beside him.

CAPTAIN SYKES

So. Your first time working a ship this size?

Vyvyan clears his throat nervously.

VYVYAN

I'm not wor....

CAPTAIN SYKES

You're going to have to speak up, son.
Can't hear you over the engine.

VYVYAN

(screaming)

I'm not working, sir, I'm a passenger.

The captain stares at Vyvyan, Bear and finally at Virgil who just shrugs.

CAPTAIN SYKES

You're not the replacement for Virgil, here? I thought you were my new co-captain. Lord knows I need one.

CO-CAPTAIN VIRGIL

Watch it, Sykes. I think I saw icebergs ahead.

CAPTAIN SYKES

See what I mean?

Vyvyan catches on to the joke.

VYVYAN

Oh, yes. Yes I do. Sorry Virgil, I am your replacement.

All three sailors laugh.

CO-CAPTAIN VIRGIL

I do get my pension, though, don't I?

Vyvyan shakes his head, gravely. Bear brings the captain a cup of tea, he offers one to Vyvyan.

BEAR

I think you've met your match, Captain.

Vyvyan takes the tea from Bear.

BEAR

Sorry, mate, no cream.

Vyvyan takes a sip of the tea.

CO-CAPTAIN VIRGIL

Now this has gone too far. He gets my tea, too?

Virgil slams his fist on the wheel. Vyvyan laughs, spitting tea.

BEAR

Keep your knickers on, Virgil. I'll get your tea.

CAPTAIN SYKES

What's your name, son?

VYVYAN

Vyvyan Wi...Holland. Vyvyan Holland, sir.

CAPTAIN SYKES

Does your mother know you're here?

VYVYAN

She's in London, sir.

CAPTAIN SYKES

You're surely not on this boat by yourself? I know I wouldn't let a bright young man like you wander around alone.

VYVYAN

We have a new nanny. She's French.

CAPTAIN SYKES

Not a very protective one, I should say.

VYVYAN

She's with my brother -- vomiting over the rail.

CO-CAPTAIN VIRGIL

Not the first I can assure you.

CAPTAIN SYKES

But you have something of the sailor in you. You may be of hardier stock than you know, Master Vyvyan.

They click mugs.

EXT. READING GAOL PRISON YARD - DAY

Prisoners circle the yard, escorted by guards.

Wilde shuffles. STICKY FINGERS, rail-thin and translucent leans toward the back of Wilde's head.

STICKY FINGERS
(whispering)
You're new, aren't you?

Wilde turns toward Sticky Fingers.

STICKY FINGERS
(whisper yells)
Keep front. Keep front.

Wilde shuffle skips to catch up to the unusually large prisoner in front of him.

WILDE
(whispers)
Yes. Yes, I am.

STICKY FINGERS
They call me Sticky Fingers. What's your name?

WILDE
Wilde.

STICKY FINGERS
What do you do, Wilde?

WILDE
I'm a writer.

STICKY FINGERS
Like a newspaper writer?

WILDE
No. Stories, poetry, plays.

STICKY FINGERS
Are you famous?

WILDE
You might say that.

STICKY FINGERS
Wilde. Wilde. That name sounds familiar.
Did you used to be Oscar Wilde?

Wilde strains a laugh.

WILDE
Yes. And I hope to be again some day.

STICKY FINGERS
Oh, my God. I snuck into one of your plays. Something about a woman.

WILDE

A lot of my plays are about a woman.

STICKY FINGERS

I was working at the time. Acquiring things. But if I remember right, this one was batty.

WILDE

Yes. Sounds like one of mine.

STICKY FINGERS

So. What you in for?

WILDE

You haven't heard?

STICKY FINGERS

We don't get the *Times* in here.

WILDE

Crimes against society.

STICKY FINGERS

That's what were all in here for. I'm a burglar. The guy in front of you is Tiny.

Wilde looks into the expansive back of TINY; whose dimension strains his uniform.

WILDE

Of course.

STICKY FINGERS

Guess what Tiny did?

WILDE

Cooked the books at his investment firm?

Tiny laughs gravel.

TINY

I like that one.

STICKY FINGERS

Not quite. Tiny came home one night....

TINY

Fingers. I can tell my own story.

STICKY FINGERS

I know you can. No harm done, Tiny.

Tiny clears his throat, the gravel remains.

TINY

I came home one night to my lovely wife...and my best friend. They were engaging in
(haughty voice)
"extracurricular activities."

Fingers gives a girlish giggle.

TINY

So I was forced to teach them a lesson.

STICKY FINGERS

You could call it that. Tiny took them both....

TINY

That's enough. Let's just say I taught them a lesson.

WILDE

I'm glad you're in front of me.

TINY

You have nothing to worry about from me...unless you covet my wife.

STICKY FINGERS

That's not a possibility, she's....

Tiny stares at Sticky Fingers over Wilde's head. Wilde bounces off Tiny's chest.

TINY

Sticky!

STICKY FINGERS

Sorry, Tiny. I'm truly sorry.

WILDE

I can assure you, my good man, you won't have to worry about that with me.

Tiny looks down into Wilde's face.

TINY

I'm glad to hear that. A man of sound morals.

WILDE

Well....

A squat guard, CHUCKLES, slams a nightstick across Tiny's chest without any effect. Chuckles retracts the stick, and timidly says:

CHUCKLES
Keep moving, Tiny. Keep it moving.

EXT. BOAT, GANGWAY - EARLY EVENING

From the captain's deck, Sykes, Virgil and Bear wave wildly at Vyvyan.

CYRIL
Who are they, Vyvyan?

NANNY
That man has no teeth.

VYVYAN
That's Bear. The other two are captains.

CYRIL
There can only be one captain....

NANNY
Bear? That's not a name. What is this Bear?

Passengers bump into them, grumbling.

VYVYAN
The older one is the captain, the other is his co-captain.

NANNY
You English have such strange names. Bear!

VYVYAN
We're not English.

CYRIL
We're Irish.

VYVYAN
And Bear is Scottish.

NANNY
All the same.

Vyvyan and Cyril roll their eyes.

INT. READING GAOL PRISON, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Chuckles stands with one hand on the door handle, the other on the oil lamp.

The hall buzzes with conversation.

CHUCKLES

Quiet! Lights out time and I don't want any chatter.

STICKY FINGERS

(falsetto voice)

Sure thing, sweetie.

Chuckles stamps halfway down the hall.

CHUCKLES

Who said that?

(beat)

Answer me!

Tiny drops his massive arms through the bars, whistles.

CHUCKLES

Do you think this is funny, Tiny?

Chuckles moves to the bars, hand on his nightstick.

CHUCKLES

Should I invite the rest of the boys down for a little party? See how funny it is then.

Tiny squeezes a little of his enormous face through the bars. Chuckles inadvertently leans back.

TINY

(whispering)

I've got a better idea, Chuckles. Why don't you come in and we'll have a little private party, just the two of us?

Chuckles stares into Tiny's black eyes. Tiny doesn't blink. Chuckles moves quickly toward the door.

CHUCKLES

That's better! Now I expect you all to behave yourselves and remain quiet. I wouldn't want to have to come back down here...Good night, ladies.

The room disappears into blackness. The door SLAM echoes through the cell block.

The room quiet except for the occasional creak of beds.
Tiny's gravelly voice penetrates the silence.

TINY

Wilde.

From the next cell, Wilde answers.

WILDE

(whispering)

Yes?

TINY

You're a writer.

WILDE

Yes.

TINY

Tell me a story...please.

Someone LAUGHS from a cell.

TINY

Shut up!

The explosion of voice echoes on the hard walls.

Wilde slides down the adjoining wall to the floor.

WILDE

What kind of a story would you like to
hear, my good man?

Tiny sits against his side of the wall.

TINY

Something fun. No depressed women.
No haughty men.

WILDE

I have some stories I wrote for my...
children.

TINY

Like what?

WILDE

One is about a selfish giant that learns
to love others.

TINY

No.

(beat)

I mean. I'm sure it's a good story, but no thank you.

WILDE

How about a pompous rocket....

TINY

No.

WILDE

Well then. The Happy Prince?

Tiny doesn't respond.

WILDE

It's about a kind-hearted statue that wants to save the people of his town from poverty. And in doing so, loses everything that made him beautiful. But a swallow still loves him for his soul.

TINY

Uh....

WILDE

It's one of my Vyvyan's fav....

Wilde chokes up. When Tiny responds his voice has softened, lost some of the gravel.

TINY

That sounds nice. Yes. I think that would do nicely.

Wilde clears his throat.

WILDE

(quietly)

"High above the city, on a tall column....

STICKY FINGERS

Excuse me, Mr. Wilde.

TINY

What!

STICKY FINGERS

It's just...if you don't mind, uh... could Mr. Wilde please speak up a bit?

TINY

Mr. Wilde?

Wilde's voice resonates through the room.

WILDE

"High above the city, on a tall column, stood the statue of the Happy Prince. He was gilded all over with leaves of fine gold...."

INT. TRAIN CABIN

The Nanny mumbles to herself, absorbed in her rosary. Cyril reads aloud.

CYRIL

'Dear little swallow,' said the Prince.

The Nanny hisses through her teeth. Vyvyan leans closer to Cyril.

CYRIL

(whispering)

'You tell me of marvellous things, but more marvellous than anything is the suffering of men and of women. There is no Mystery so great as Misery.'

INT. READING GAOL PRISON, WILDE'S CELL

Wilde paces his cell, gesticulating. His voice modifies with each character he portrays.

WILDE

"I am glad that you are going to Egypt at last, little Swallow," said the Prince, "you have stayed too long here; but you must kiss me on the lips, for I love you."

"It is not to Egypt that I am going," said the Swallow. "I am going to the House of Death. Death is the brother of Sleep, is he not?"

And he kissed the Happy Prince on the lips, and fell down at his feet."

From a cell we hear a gasp. Wilde smiles.

WILDE

"At that moment a curious crack sounded inside the statue as if something had broken. The fact is that the leaden heart had snapped right in two."

INT. TRAIN CABIN

Cyril closes the book. The Nanny moves fingers from bead to bead, rocking as she prays.

VYVYAN
Mademoiselle?

The Nanny doesn't look up. Cyril raises his voice.

CYRIL
Mademoiselle!

NANNY
(hisses)
Yes?

VYVYAN
We're hungry.

NANNY
What?

CYRIL
Hungry. Vyvyan and I are hungry.

The Nanny holds both palms up still holding the rosary.

VYVYAN
We didn't have lunch.

NANNY
We'll eat when we get to Paris.

CYRIL
When will that be?

NANNY
In a while! Can you not see I am busy
with devotions?

The boys move closer to each other.

NANNY
I will teach you the Lord's Prayer.

CYRIL
Mademoiselle, we know the Lord's Prayer.

NANNY
In French. We will pray it together.

VYVYAN
Now?

NANNY

Yes.

VYVYAN

But we're not in church.

NANNY

You don't have to be in church to pray!

VYVYAN

I pray at night...I pray for....

Vyvyan looks at Cyril unsure of how to continue.

The Nanny huffs.

NANNY

Prayer is not for begging, it's for giving thanks, and for devotion, and absolution.

The boys look confused. She looks up to the ceiling.

NANNY

Ah, me. I see you have much to learn in the ways of religious life.

INT. READING GAOL PRISON, WILDE'S CELL

Wilde paces. His voice has softened slightly.

WILDE

"Bring me the two most precious things in the city," said God to one of His Angels; and the Angel brought him the leaden heart and the dead bird.

"You have rightly chosen," said God, "for in my garden of Paradise this little bird shall sing for evermore, and in my city of gold the Happy Prince shall praise me."

Wilde stops at the bars. The only sound the deep breathing of inmates.

INT. PARIS HOTEL - NIGHT

The boys lie on beds in a sparse room. Two small candles on the mantelpiece provide the only light.

The Nanny dressed in black leans against the mantel.

VYVYAN

Will you tell us a story?

NANNY

What?

CYRIL

Our father always....

The Nanny holds up her hand.

NANNY

No story. You are not babies anymore, and I am too busy. I expect you to fall fast asleep. We leave in the morning. I'll be back soon.

CYRIL

Aren't you going to sleep?

NANNY

I have errands.

VYVYAN

Aren't the stores closed?

The Nanny squares her shoulders, hands on both hips.

NANNY

I will be back soon. That's all you need to know.

She blows out the candles. The action has a theatrical element until she trips on the fireplace tools. They CRASH to the floor and she struggles to right them.

NANNY

I'm fine. No concerns.

A shaft of light enters the room briefly before she closes the door and locks it. Her footsteps CLICK on the stairs. Vyvyan and Cyril break into laughter.

CYRIL

Well, that was impressive.

Cyril turns toward Vyvyan, a small smile upon his face.

Cyril loses his smile and stares into the ceiling.

CYRIL

That was some dinner, wasn't it? Who ever heard of bread and jam for dinner? I don't think I like Paris.

VYVYAN

Me either.

Vyvyan throws the covers off and puts on his slippers.

VYVYAN

Let's go.

CYRIL

Where?

VYVYAN

To get something to eat of course.

CYRIL

But she locked us in.

Vyvyan pulls the curtains open to let light into the room. He places a chair in front of the door, stands on it and sweeps the upper door frame.

VYVYAN

If we're lucky....

He turns triumphantly holding the key.

INT. LOBBY

Creaky stairs. An OLD MAN at the front desk nods over a book.

When Cyril reaches the bottom of the stairs, he crawls on all fours; Vyvyan follows suit.

They stop in front of the desk as the old man snores himself awake and drifts back asleep again.

INT. HALLWAY

The boys stand. There are four doors, two on either side. On the left are toilets.

VYVYAN

Well, that narrows it down to two.

Cyril leans an ear to the first one. Vyvyan follows his example.

VYVYAN

What are we listening for?

CYRIL

I don't know.

Vyvyan moves to the next door. Cyril moves with him.

VYVYAN

(whispering)

Let's try this one.

CYRIL

Wait.

INT. KITCHEN

Vyvyan steps through the door. The remnants of a chicken sit on a large platter. They creep forward.

SIMONE (O.S.)

What do you think you're doing?

A large woman, SIMONE, sits at a ridiculously small table. A chicken leg midway to her mouth.

Cyril back peddles toward the door.

VYVYAN

We're hungry.

CYRIL

Sorry. We're leaving.

He pulls Vyvyan's shoulder, who resists.

SIMONE

Didn't you have supper?

Vyvyan shakes his head.

SIMONE

You didn't?

VYVYAN

Just bread and jam. And coffee. That made my stomach burn. And then our Nanny left us alone in....

Simone holds up a hand.

SIMONE

Left you alone? Here in the hotel? Two babies.

Simone shakes her head.

VYVYAN

We're not bab....

Cyril slaps a hand over Vyvyan's mouth.

CYRIL

Yes, ma'am.

Simone rocks herself free from the seat. She places hands on each of the boys' shoulders. The force rocks Vyvyan.

Simone leans down to their height.

SIMONE

I cannot give you any of this chicken. I know you had your eyes set on it, but the manager would have my head. He thinks I should starve myself. Eat like a bird. How can I be sure of a dish's merit if I don't sample?

Cyril shrugs.

SIMONE

Now. Let's see what we can make for two fine young gentlemen.

She opens an icebox and hands back thick-sliced bacon. Vyvyan takes it and hands it to Cyril. Cheese, milk and butter come next; followed by asparagus and eggs.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Vyvyan and Cyril sit at the table. Simone dances around the kitchen.

The boys shovel omelettes into their mouths. Simone tosses asparagus, shiny with butter, onto their plates.

The boys play swords with them. Simone pirouettes as she ladles butter. Her gestures blend into cooking.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Vyvyan and Cyril doze, elbows on the table. Simone leans on the table smiling broadly.

SIMONE

Any more?

They both groan.

CYRIL

That was the best meal I've ever had.

Simone bows with her head.

SIMONE

Thank you. But of course, you're English,
so....

She shrugs.

VYVYAN

Irish.

SIMONE

Same thing.

The boys smile at each other.

SIMONE

Where is your mother?

CYRIL

She's in England. We're selling our house
and she's involved with the agents.

SIMONE

What about your father?

VYVYAN

He's in India.

Cyril whips his head toward Vyvyan.

VYVYAN

The foreign legion.

Simone grabs a orphaned asparagus stem and pops it in her
mouth.

SIMONE

Must be lonely by yourself.

CYRIL

We're not by ourselves, our Nanny....

SIMONE

Ha! Some Nanny.

She smiles coquettishly at the boys.

SIMONE

I used to be a dancer. Ballerina.

VYVYAN

What happened?

Simone brushes a strand of hair from her face in a girlish manner.

SIMONE

I got married.

CYRIL

What does your husband do?

Simone gestures around her.

SIMONE

He's the manager.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - LATER

The old man continues to nod himself in and out of sleep. The boys kneel on all fours.

SIMONE (O.S.)

What are you doing?

The boys jump. Simone pulls them to their feet by the collar.

SIMONE

Pierre wouldn't awaken if you put a snake down his pants.

She yells to the old man.

SIMONE

Isn't that right, Pierre?

He continues his rhythmic nodding. She turns both boys around and marches them to the stairs.

SIMONE

Now you get to bed before that errant Nanny returns.

She swats them on their behinds. Vyvyan giggles. Simone watches them reach the top of the stairs.

As she passes the desk, she DINGS the call bell on the desk. The old man continues to nod.

INT. READING GAOL PRISON, LAUNDRY ROOM - MORNING

Steam rises from a vat of milky water. INMATES stir clothing with paddles.

The RINSING INMATE throws a sheet in front of the SQUEEZING INMATE who places it in a giant roller.

TOSSING INMATES throw clothes to HANGING INMATES, who place them on a line looped around gears.

STUMPY, a no-neck blob of a man hits Wilde with a rolled up sheet. Wilde stumbles back to the line to hang it.

Stumpy grabs the next sheet and hurls it at Wilde. Tiny intercepts it while his sheet flies past under the line.

TINY

Would you mind getting that for me,
Wilde?

Wilde retrieves the sheet.

STUMPY

What's wrong, Tiny? Afraid I'll hurt your
boyfriend?

Tiny uses the sheet as a whip. Stumpy blocks it with a huge forearm. The SNAP resonates.

STUMPY

Aren't you a little old for him? I
understand he likes young boys.

Tiny pulls Stumpy toward him.

TINY

Watch it, Stumpy. I may have to rearrange
your larynx. If I can find it.

STUMPY

So you are sweet on him.

Tiny continues to pull Stumpy to him.

TINY

When are you going to learn to shut your
trap about things you don't know?

STUMPY

Oh, but I do know. Chuckles told me.

Tiny laughs and shakes his head.

TINY

Yes. And we all know how reliable
Chuckles is.

Face to face, they let the sheet fall to the floor.

TINY

Isn't that how you got in here? Listening
to lies? Wilde has two boys and a wife. A
very pretty wife, I bet.

Wilde steps forward, but well behind Tiny.

WILDE

The loveliest in all of England. Curly
brown hair, sparkling violet eyes.

STUMPY

(gyrating his hips)
Maybe I should pay her a visit when I get
out?

Tiny grabs Stumpy's neck.

TINY

(hissing)
That was disrespectful.

Stumpy throws a quick jab into Tiny's chest, forcing air
from his lungs, but he increases his grip.

TINY

Apologize.

Stumpy dances on tip-toes as Tiny lifts up on his neck.

TINY

Now!

STUMPY

(squeaking)
I'm sorry.

TINY

Not to me, to him.

Stumpy leans his head around Tiny.

STUMPY

(even softer, strained)
I'm sorry.

Tiny lets go. Stumpy leans over as he gasps.

He throws a hook toward Tiny's groin. Tiny avoids the punch and pounds a fist into Stumpy's head, driving him to the floor.

Tiny looks at the prone body of Stumpy.

TINY
I think he's sorry now.

INT. PARIS HOTEL, DINING ROOM - MORNING

The boys devour bread with jam. The Nanny picks at hers. Simone brings another basket.

SIMONE
You boys are famished.

VYVYAN
The bread's delicious.

They smile angelically. Simone reaches for the Nanny's full plate.

SIMONE
Fait?

She takes the plate and leaves.

NANNY
Not going to complain about the bread and jam?

VYVYAN
No. It's wonderful.

The Nanny looks over at Simone.

NANNY
Don't talk to her. She's evil. She was waiting for me in the lobby last night. She said you were too young to be left alone - just babies. I wonder how she knew about that?

The Nanny narrows her eyes to Cyril and Vyvyan. They stuff bread in their mouths.

EXT. TRAIN PLATFORM, PARIS - MORNING

A PORTER tries to take a large black leather case from the Nanny.

The boys stand separate from the crowd.

NANNY

Let go. You have no right.

PORTER

Mademoiselle. This case is too big to store in your cabin.

NANNY

That is not your concern. I shall sleep upright if necessary....

They continue to argue as Cyril and Vyvyan look on.

CYRIL

So which one of us is going to have to sleep on the case?

VYVYAN

I don't remember that case, do you?

The Nanny pulls the case from the porter.

NANNY

Cyril, Vyvyan! In the train. Now!

INT. GAOL PRISON CELLS - NIGHT

Chuckles strolls past cells. Two guards flank him. He squares himself in front of Wilde's cell. Wilde sits from a prone position.

CHUCKLES

You wanted to see me?

Wilde stands and offers a charming smile.

WILDE

Yes. I wish to ask a favor. Something that might improve my mind during my stay.

Chuckles smirks. He places hands on hips and stretches himself to his full abbreviated height.

CHUCKLES

Of course. We are here to please, naturally.

WILDE

I'm so glad to hear that. I was hoping, if it's not too much of an inconvenience of course, to receive some paper and pen.

Chuckles contrives a perplexed face.

CHUCKLES

I'm sorry, Mr. Wilde, I thought you said paper and pen.

WILDE

Yes, sir. I most certainly did.

CHUCKLES

And this will improve your mind, you say.

WILDE

That is my most ardent hope, sir.

Chuckles rubs his chin.

CHUCKLES

I'm a simple man, Wilde. Not cultured like yourself. I fail to see how pen and paper might improve your mind.

Wilde smiles. And moves to the bars. The guards move forward, but Chuckles holds them off.

WILDE

I had hoped to occupy my mind with writing, sir. To compose my thoughts upon paper, and thus, bring myself to a better understanding of my predicament.

CHUCKLES

Yes. I see. A literary occupation.

Wilde smiles and nods in agreement.

CHUCKLES

Something akin to, oh, what was that....

Chuckles pretends to grasp at a thought.

CHUCKLES

Ah, yes. The Portrait of Dorian Gray. Something of that ilk?

WILDE

No. Nothing that complex, more like rumination....

CHUCKLES
Not complex. Immoral.

WILDE
Immoral?

CHUCKLES
Yes. I would have assumed you would be quite familiar with the term immoral....

Wilde holds up a hand.

WILDE
I know what immoral means, Chuckles. I just don't know what it has to do with my book, or me.

CHUCKLES
You don't? Surely you would understand. You wrote the book did you not?

WILDE
There is nothing immoral about the book. It is a moral story.

CHUCKLES
Immoral, sir.

WILDE
What men call immoral books are those that remind them of their own faults. Did you read my book?

CHUCKLES
Of course not. But I have a friend....

WILDE
Then how do you know it's immoral?

Chuckles shakes his head.

CHUCKLES
Are you calling my friend a liar? Or do you just assume no one else is intelligent enough to understand your writing?

WILDE
I did not mean to cause offense....

CHUCKLES
Oh. But you did. You do. You cause offense by the very nature of why you're here.

Instead of wasting your time writing immoral stories, maybe you should spend your time thinking about what landed you here in the first place....

WILDE

That's what the paper....

GUARD #1 pulls his nightstick and SLAMS it across the bars.

GUARD #1

Do not interrupt!

Chuckles holds up a hand.

CHUCKLES

Mr. Wilde can't help it. He can't resist hearing himself talk. What I was about to say is maybe you should think about your situation, and how to become a normal member of society upon your release.

Chuckles smiles at Wilde.

CHUCKLES

No paper. No pen.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

The Nanny opens the cabin door as Cyril drags the case down the hall. Passengers push past. The Nanny impatiently grabs the case and tosses it on the bench.

Cyril and Vyvyan stand outside the door.

NANNY

Well? What are you doing? Sit.

VYVYAN

We thought we might....

NANNY

Yes?

Vyvyan and Cyril look at each other.

CYRIL

Uh, well, uh, look....

NANNY

Explore?

VYVYAN

Yes.

The Nanny looks at her case, then at the boys.

NANNY

You have leave.

The boys are surprised.

NANNY

But you must be back before our stop in Switzerland.

VYVYAN

That's not until....

Cyril elbows Vyvyan.

CYRIL

Yes, mademoiselle.

The Nanny wags a finger at them.

NANNY

And stay away from trouble.

VYVYAN

Yes, mademoiselle.

INT. WILDE'S HOUSE - DAY

Constance stands in the foyer. Workmen move past with furniture.

A SUPERVISOR, steps up to Constance with a ledger.

SUPERVISOR

Mrs. Wilde? If you'll please sign?

Constance signs.

SUPERVISOR

Upon sale of the items, and agreement with your creditors, we shall determine if a credit or debit balance exists. You shall be promptly informed.

The Supervisor nods and turns to leave.

CONSTANCE

(flatly)

I won't be here.

The Supervisor spins around.

SUPERVISOR

I'm sorry?

CONSTANCE

I won't be here.

SUPERVISOR

But the transaction isn't complete.

Constance trains bright eyes on the Supervisor.

CONSTANCE

It's completed for me....

SUPERVISOR

Madam, you must understand the gravity of....

CONSTANCE

You've taken my furniture, my books, my children's toys, my husband. What gravity have I failed to comprehend?

SUPERVISOR

Mrs. Wilde. Please don't make this personal....

CONSTANCE

Not personal? I am bankrupt! My children are abroad. My husband is in jail. And you want me to stay in this empty house until you decide my future. Why should I find this personal?

SUPERVISOR

Mrs. Wilde. I'm only doing my job.

CONSTANCE

I'm sure you believe that to be so. I'm sure that's what the judge is telling himself; the college friend who prosecuted my husband; the lawyers who have taken our last shilling; and Queensberry as he dines at his club tonight. It's only your job. Fulfilling your moral obligation. I wish your family safety from such sanctimonious vultures as yourself.

The Supervisor SLAMS the door behind him.

INT. READING GAOL PRISON, WILDE'S CELL - NIGHT

Wilde lies on his bed, the cell dark except for a streak of light from the moon.

 TINY (O.S.)
Wilde?

 WILDE
Yes, Tiny?

 TINY (O.S.)
I could get you some paper.

Wilde walks to the bars.

 WILDE
Yes?

Tiny's bed creaks from the relief of his weight. His voice appears close to Wilde.

 TINY (O.S.)
But you must do something for me.

Wilde leans his head against the bars.

 WILDE
And what would that something be?

 TINY
A small thing, really. Nothing much to you.

Wilde clears his throat.

 WILDE
Tiny. This is not like you. Get to the point.

 TINY
A story.

 WILDE
Yes?

 TINY
A story for every page of paper.

Wilde laughs.

 WILDE
Not a big thing? Tiny, I'd have to be Shakespeare to uphold that bargain.

TINY
What do you mean?

WILDE
I'm not that prolific.

TINY
What?

WILDE
I don't have that many stories.

The bars DING from Tiny's head.

TINY
Oh.

WILDE
But I do have a compromise. Two pages for
every chapter.
(beat)
And, of course, a pen.

INT. TRAIN - NIGHT

Cyril walks with purpose, Vyvyan alternates between dance-hopping and running to catch up with Cyril.

Cyril stops abruptly and Vyvyan runs into his back.

CYRIL
Oh no.

Cyril runs along the hall. Vyvyan follows. Red and yellow light flickers on the cabin window curtain.

Cyril skids to a stop and Vyvyan slides behind him. Light flickers on their faces.

VYVYAN
Cyril. What has she done?

Cyril takes a deep breath and shoves the door open as he jumps back.

The large black case lays empty on the bench.

Candles cover the bench, window sill, floor. A statue of the Virgin Mary is surrounded by angels.

The kneeling Nanny spins with a maddened face.

NANNY
(croaking)
Get in here. On your knees. Pray for your
soul!

INT. CAFE ROYAL - DAY

The maitre d' directs Constance to a table by the window.
Robbie Ross stands upon her appearance.

ROBBIE
My dearest Constance.

He kisses both cheeks.

CONSTANCE
Robbie. It's so kind of you to meet me.

Robbie waves away the compliment.

ROBBIE
Kind? It is nothing of the sort. Oscar is
my greatest friend. And I love you both.

He holds her hands, and looks at her appraisingly.

ROBBIE
Constance, you're an absolute vision.

She dips her head and begins to weep quietly. Robbie
looks around, then pulls her forward. She blocks him.

CONSTANCE
Please. Take a seat. We have much to talk
about.

Constance dabs her eyes.

CONSTANCE
I'm sorry, Robbie. You don't need this.

ROBBIE
Constance, you insult me. I hope you
consider me one of your dearest friends,
as I consider you.

CONSTANCE
You are certainly one of our truest
friends.

ROBBIE
And shall ever be.

A ghoulish WAITER quietly appears.

WAITER

What may I do for you?

Constance jumps. Robbie chuckles, causing Constance to laugh. The waiter clears his throat.

ROBBIE

A couple of gin and tonics, Constance?

CONSTANCE

It's a little early....

ROBBIE

Yes. It is. Two gin and tonics it is then.

The waiter nods solemnly.

WAITER

As you wish, sir.

Robbie smiles comfortingly at Constance.

ROBBIE

Your missive made the meeting sound urgent.

CONSTANCE

It is. I am leaving to follow the children.

ROBBIE

Wonderful.

CONSTANCE

But I need your assistance.

ROBBIE

Anything you want you shall have.

CONSTANCE

I meet with Oscar tomorrow. I will work out all financial matters between us, but I need someone to handle affairs while I am in Europe. I hope it won't be too....

Robbie grabs Constance's hand. He beams.

ROBBIE

I am absolutely honored. Consider me your faithful servant, in all matters.

The waiter materializes again, causing them both to start.

WAITER
Your beverages, sir.

The waiter sets the drinks and immediately disappears.

CONSTANCE
He should wear a bell.

Robbie holds up his glass for a toast.

ROBBIE
To better times.

Constance taps her glass against his.

INT. HOTEL GLION, SWITZERLAND - DAY

Vyvyan, Cyril and the Nanny stand in the ornate foyer.

Although stately, the hotel shows signs of wear. The MANAGER, an older man with a permanent smile, hands a ledger to the Nanny.

NANNY
We will need two rooms. One for me and one for the boys.

The Manager nods politely and rings the bell. An even older BELLHOP shows up for the bags.

MANAGER
Take these bags to rooms 21 and 22, immediately.

He reaches for the black leather case.

NANNY
Not that one. I shall take that one.

The bellhop struggles with the cases.

NANNY
(to the boys)
Go off and play. I need time to myself.

INT. GLION HOTEL, HALLWAY

Vyvyan and Cyril sword fight with sticks in a wide hallway. Large chandeliers cast uneven light.

At the end of the hall, double doors stand open.

Cyril lunges at Vyvyan, scoring a direct hit. Vyvyan drops his stick, stumbles backward, and falls to the floor facing the open doors.

The room is even darker than the hallway. Every window covered with heavy drapes.

ALEXANDRA, white hair, pale skin, peeks around a chair. TATYANA, a clone with a black streak of hair from her forehead back, stands by her sister.

Both sisters smile at the boys. Tatyana makes a 'come here' gesture. Vyvyan turns a questioning face to Cyril.

INT. READING GAOL PRISON - DAY

Constance sits across from Wilde. Their hands inches from each other.

CONSTANCE

Like I said, they've taken everything. I can't stay here and watch them dismantle the rest of my life.

Wilde moves a finger toward Constance's hand. She moves her hand back slightly, shakes her head.

CONSTANCE

We have much to discuss, and very little time.

WILDE

My dearest Constance....

Constance holds up a hand.

CONSTANCE

Oscar. You must let me finish. This is too difficult already. Robbie has agreed to help with all finances so I may go be with the boys. It will be some time before our debts are cleared. He knows the responsibility he has accepted. You will never be able to repay his debt.

Wilde nods solemnly.

CONSTANCE

I don't want you to respond to the next thing I say. You must promise.

Wilde hesitates, then nods.

CONSTANCE

I still love you. I hope you can benefit from this horrendous event, but I doubt that we shall. You musn't try to correspond with the children. I don't know how I will explain to them what's happened, but it must be on my terms. You must decide if you want to be part of this family again. But if you do, realize that our children don't need Oscar Wilde, they need a father.

Constance stands. Wilde stands with her.

CONSTANCE

Goodbye, Oscar.

Wilde reaches out, but she turns and leaves.

INT. GLION HOTEL, COUNTESESSES' ROOMS - AFTERNOON

Cigarette smoke fogs the room. Vyvyan and Cyril scoop tobacco into rolls of paper.

Alexandra pours tea. She hands a cup to Tatyana. She serves the boys next.

TATYANA

Alexander was always so handsome on his horse....

Tatyana adds two sugar cubes to her tea. Alexandra pours herself a cup.

ALEXANDRA

Tsar Alexander.

Tatyana tips her tea toward Alexandra.

TATYANA

He give us rides on his horse. Pure white. I always pretend to be princess. He was so charming, so kind.

ALEXANDRA

You were upset when he engaged.

Tatyana waves away the comment.

TATYANA

I was little girl. His Princess Marie,
woman. So beautiful.

ALEXANDRA

Not charming though.

TATYANA

Just shy.

ALEXANDRA

Not well bred.

TATYANA

No. That's true. But Alexander was so
kind.

ALEXANDRA

Too kind.

TATYANA

Yes. Maybe so. God rest his soul.

Tatyana wipes an imaginary tear.

VYVYAN

What happened to him?

Alexandra makes a big wave with both hands.

ALEXANDRA

Boom! Blown up.

CYRIL

Blown up? Really?

Tatyana nods.

TATYANA

Yes. Riding to Winter Palace. Hand
grenades. Some crazy Pole. Bad luck.

Tatyana shrugs and takes another sip of tea. She frowns
and adds three more cubes of sugar.

ALEXANDRA

But he lucky other four times.

Cyril and Vyvyan stare at each other, wide-eyed.

ALEXANDRA

More tea?

Tatyana jumps up quickly.

TATYANA

Oh, Alexandra. The chocolate biscuits!

Alexandra clamps a hand over her mouth, nodding her head excitedly.

TATYANA

You shall love them. Dmitri, our nephew, sent them. He's a soldier...just like your father.

Constance enters the frame of the open doorway. She taps gently on the door to get attention.

CONSTANCE

Hello, boys. Isn't this an interesting place to find you?

VYVYAN

Mother!

The boys run to her. Tatyana and Alexandra greet her.

TATYANA

My dear. Excellent to meet you. I am Tatyana and this is my sister, Alexandra.

ALEXANDRA

Yes.

Constance kisses both boys repeatedly, then extends her hand to the sisters.

CONSTANCE

And I am Constance Holland.

She looks down at the boys.

CONSTANCE

And where is that Nanny of yours?

Tatyana humphs. Alexandra shakes her head.

TATYANA

Pardon my say so, but not much of Nanny. She never around.

Alexandra holds up a cup of tea.

ALEXANDRA

Dear. Come have tea.

Tatyana offers her arm to Cyril. Constance leads Vyvyan to the chairs. In the ashtray are four lit cigarettes.

CONSTANCE

Cyril, Vyvyan. Have you been smoking?

Alexandra and Tatyana follow her eyes to the ashtray.

TATYANA

Ah, Alexandra! We do it again!

Alexandra looks at Constance.

ALEXANDRA

Sometime we talk and forget we have
cigarette already.

She shrugs like a young girl.

CONSTANCE

Now, boys. Tell me about this absent
Nanny.

Tatyana clears her throat.

TATYANA

Please, madam. Allow me. Boys will be too
kind.

INT. READING GAOL PRISON, WARDEN'S QUARTERS - DAY

WARDEN NELSON stands when Wilde enters with two guards.
Nelson gestures to a chair.

WARDEN NELSON

Wilde, I trust I can depend on you to be
a gentleman?

The guards exit. Nelson and Wilde sit.

WARDEN NELSON

It has come to my attention that you
suffered some unnecessary troubles during
my predecessor's time.

WILDE

You might say that.

WARDEN NELSON

I want to apologize. I cannot do anything
about the rumors, nor the subsequent
difficulties, but I can assure you that
will no longer be tolerated.

WILDE

Thank you.

WARDEN NELSON

Is there anything else I can do?

Wilde looks at the Warden appraisingly.

WILDE

I had requested paper and pen at one time.

WARDEN NELSON

And you were denied?

Wilde nods.

WARDEN NELSON

For letters?

WILDE

And a journal.

WARDEN NELSON

I don't see why that should be a problem. I can allow you one letter, no more than two pages, to leave by post every month. As for your journal - I do assume it will be more than just an ordinary journal?

WILDE

I've never endeavored for ordinary.

INT. COUNTESESSES' ROOMS - AFTERNOON

The Nanny storms into the room followed closely by Constance. The boys roll cigarettes, the sisters smoke.

NANNY

Liars! Lying liars! Are you happy? I've been discharged.

Constance spins the Nanny around to face her.

CONSTANCE

Your religious fanaticism got you dismissed.

NANNY

Blasphemer!

CONSTANCE

Your incompetence got you dismissed.

NANNY

I cared for them when you didn't.

CONSTANCE

All those crazy candles got you
dismissed. No wonder my boys went hungry.
You are worthless!

NANNY

Your boys are heathens. Just like their
father.

Constance slaps her.

Alexandra and Tatyana jump to their feet. Alexandra turns
the Nanny around, wagging a finger in the Nanny's face.

ALEXANDRA

How dare you speak of my boys this way!
You wretched dog.

Tatyana pulls down a sword from a display.

TATYANA

If you not know your place, peasant, I
teach you!

She moves toward the Nanny, sword raised. Constance, and
the boys stare open-mouthed. Alexandra claps her hands.

The Nanny stands her ground.

NANNY

You won't dare touch me. I'll have you
arrested.

TATYANA

It be hard to tell police when you dead.

Tatyana swings the sword and a vase shatters.

The Nanny holds her ground but shakes.

NANNY

If you dare....

TATYANA

You don't lecture me, peasant.

Tatyana raises the sword and SCREAMS.

The Nanny SHRIEKS and runs out of the room.

Tatyana leans on the sword. Alexandra begins to laugh.
Tatyana replaces the sword, smiles at the boys.

TATYANA

That one never grow old.

Constance picks up the shards of the vase.

CONSTANCE

Your poor vase. I hope it wasn't an heirloom.

Tatyana shrugs.

TATYANA

I don't know.

CONSTANCE

What do you mean you don't know?

TATYANA

I take from hotel lobby.

EXT. GLION HOTEL - DAY

SUPER: TWO WEEKS LATER

The old bellhop struggles to put cases into a carriage. Constance and the boys stand with the Countesses.

Tatyana presents a black case to Constance. Alexandra squashes both boys against her.

TATYANA

It not much, but maybe you remember us?

Constance takes the case.

CONSTANCE

I think you two would be impossible to forget.

She opens the case to reveal the sword.

TATYANA

To chase away bad spirits.

Constance laughs. Tatyana turns to the boys.

TATYANA

You listen to your mother. She great woman.

Tatyana puts a hand to each boy's face.

TATYANA

Be good boys. Don't disappoint.

She kisses Cyril and Vyvyan, then holds Alexandra's face.

TATYANA

You must let go now, Alexandra. They'll be fine.

Alexandra nods her head, then lets go. The boys breathe in heavily.

ALEXANDRA

My beautiful boys. You be good, da?

Vyvyan and Cyril nod. Cyril moves away. Alexandra grabs Vyvyan's arm.

ALEXANDRA

Never be ashamed of who you are.

Vyvyan nods.

ALEXANDRA

No more stories?

Vyvyan shakes his head.

ALEXANDRA

The ignorant never understand a great soul.

Vyvyan half-heartedly nods. Alexandra pushes him toward the carriage.

CONSTANCE

Thank you both for taking care of my sons.

Tatyana waves the compliment away.

TATYANA

We should thank you. We now have cigarettes for lifetime.

INT. READING GAOL PRISON, WILDE'S CELL - MORNING

Wilde scrubs his floor. We hear the WHISTLE and CLICKING FEET of Chuckles. He appears at the bars of Wilde's cell.

CHUCKLES

Mr. Wilde?

WILDE

Yes, sir?

Wilde wipes his hands on his trousers. Chuckles hands paper and pen through the bars. Wilde grabs them, but Chuckles doesn't let go.

CHUCKLES

Sir. I wish to ask your forgiveness....

WILDE

Forgiveness is....

Chuckles clears his throat.

CHUCKLES

I had not finished, sir.

Wilde smiles and nods his head.

WILDE

I seem to be guilty of my old faults.
Sorry. Please continue.

CHUCKLES

I ask your forgiveness for my actions.
Warden Nelson advised me on the error of
my ways.

Wilde nods and pulls at the papers, but Chuckles still doesn't let go.

CHUCKLES

And I ask forgiveness for what was done
to you.

Wilde painfully smiles.

CHUCKLES

But he didn't ask me to deliver these. I
offered.

WILDE

Thank you, sir. You are a good man.

Chuckles shakes his head vehemently.

CHUCKLES

You give me too much credit. Warden
Nelson is the good man.

He releases the paper and pen. Chuckles slips a copy of The Picture of Dorian Gray through the bars.

CHUCKLES

I hope this brings you some comfort.

Chuckles leaves. Wilde moves to his bunk, kneels on the floor, and gently places a sheet of paper under the book.

He shakily writes the title "De Profundis" at the top of the paper. He stares at it.

TINY (O.S.)

I thought we had a deal, Wilde?

WILDE

What? Oh, yes. Don't worry, Tiny, I shall remain loyal to my bargain.

TINY (O.S.)

But there is no bargain anymore. You have your paper.

Wilde walks the book to the bars and holds it toward Tiny's cell.

WILDE

And your friendship?

TINY (O.S.)

Yes. Of course. But the friendship of a killer is hardly a bargain.

Tiny takes the book and Wilde walks back to his bed.

WILDE

You cheat your worth. Your loyalty is in gold.

Tiny GUFFAWS. His bed CREAKS. Wilde continues to write.

WILDE (V.O.)

Suffering is one very long moment.

INT. TRAIN CABIN - DAY

Constance reads. Cyril leans against the window. Vyvyan plays with a wooden NESTING DOLL of a Russian soldier.

WILDE (V.O.)

We cannot divide it by seasons. We can only record its moods, and chronicle their return.

INT. READING GAOL PRISON, WILDE'S CELL

Wilde continues to write.

WILDE (V.O.)

The gods had given me almost everything.
But I let myself be lured into long
spells of senseless and sensual ease.

INT. CAFE ROYAL - DAY

Bosie greets the maitre' d', who points to a table at the back of the room. Bosie slips him a tip. The group of dandy, young men at the table wave wildly.

WILDE (V.O.)

I amused myself with being a Flaneur, a
dandy, a man of fashion. I surrounded
myself with the smaller natures and the
meaner minds.

Bosie smiles as he stops in front of Robbie Ross' table and bows exaggeratedly.

Ross scowls. Bosie laughs and moves to the table of friends.

WILDE (V.O.)

I became the spendthrift of my own
genius, and to waste an eternal youth
gave me a curious joy. Tired of being on
the heights, I deliberately went to the
depths in the search for new sensation.

Bosie holds the face of one of the youngest men and kisses him on the cheek. He looks at Ross.

Ross tosses money on the table and leaves. Bosie waves and laughs.

WILDE (V.O.)

I grew careless of the lives of others. I
took pleasure where it pleased me, and
passed on. I ceased to be lord over
myself. I was no longer the captain of my
soul, and did not know it. I allowed
pleasure to dominate me. I ended in
horrible disgrace. There is only one
thing for me now, absolute humility.

INT. READING GAOL PRISON, CELL BLOCK - DAY

Warden Nelson walks solemnly with four guards. He stops at Tiny's cell.

WARDEN NELSON

Mr. Charles Woodridge. It's time.

Tiny moves to the cell door. Nelson motions two of the guards forward with chains.

WARDEN NELSON

I'm sorry Mr. Woodridge. Regulations.

TINY

That's fine, sir. No worries.

The guards chain his legs and hands, and join the two chains. They lightly push him toward the door.

TINY

Warden Nelson, sir. May I give Wilde a gift before I go?

Nelson nods. Tiny pulls a book from under his cover.

Wilde waits at the bars. Tiny hands him the book. Wilde looks at the cover - The Soul of Man by Oscar Wilde.

TINY

Can't say as I understood everything, but I enjoyed it.

WILDE

Wherever did you find it?

TINY

A friend brought it to me. After I told him about my quirky convict mate.

Wilde smiles.

TINY

Sorry I can't return your other book. I suspect Sticky nicked it.

Wilde turns to Warden Nelson.

WILDE

Where is he being transferred?

Nelson and Tiny give each other uncomfortable looks.

TINY
 Can't say as I'll be transferred
 anywhere.

Wilde is confused.

TINY
 I finally must pay for my sins.

Wilde holds out his hand and Tiny shakes it.

WILDE
 You paid for your sins already. This is
 man's pride you are paying for.

TINY
 Sounds like something out of your book.
 I had some questions about that book, but
 it looks as if I'm out of time. Didn't
 like it as much as The Happy Prince,
 though.

Wilde forces a smile.

WILDE
 Neither did I.

MONTAGE ACCOMPANYING WILDE'S POEM "THE BALLAD OF READING
 GAOL."

-- Tiny shuffles across the prison ground.

-- Tiny walks, then trips, up the gallows stairs.

-- He stands beside a swinging noose as a CLERGYMAN reads
 the last rites.

-- Tiny drops through the hole and swings.

-- Tiny is wrapped in a white cloth. Guards dump him into
 the ditch.

WILDE (V.O.)
 "In Reading gaol by Reading town
 There is a pit of shame,
 And in it lies a wretched man
 Eaten by teeth of flame,
 In a burning winding-sheet he lies,
 And his grave has got no name.
 And there, till Christ call forth the
 dead, In silence let him lie:
 No need to waste the foolish tear,
 Or heave the windy sigh:

The man had killed the thing he loved,
 And so he had to die.
 And all men kill the thing they love,
 By all let this be heard,
 Some do it with a bitter look,
 Some with a flattering word,
 The coward does it with a kiss,
 The brave man with a sword!"

EXT. MONACO MONASTERY ENTRANCE - MORNING

Vyvyan stands beside suitcases. Constance kisses both cheeks. Vyvyan hugs her tightly.

She pulls back, gives one last hug, then cries as she runs to the carriage.

Constance leans out the window to blow a kiss. A BROTHER places an arm around Vyvyan's shoulders.

EXT. READING GAOL PRISON GATE - DAY

SUPER: MAY 19, 1897

Robbie Ross paces outside the gate. He looks at his watch.

The heavy gate opens. Wilde steps out in a gray suit.

Robbie rushes to Wilde and gives him a hug, then holds him at arms length.

ROBBIE

My dearest Oscar. You look quite changed.

WILDE

I am a changed man, Robbie. The Oscar Wilde you see before you is a man of absolute humility.

ROBBIE

That would certainly be a change.

INT. SPHYNX'S HOUSE, DRAWING ROOM - LATER

A yellow carnation on his haggard suit, Wilde enters.

Sphinx - now middle-aged - a hat rakishly tilted on her head, kisses Wilde and gives him a long hug.

Wilde is overcome by the affection.

WILDE

Sphynx, how marvellous of you to know exactly the right hat to wear at seven o'clock in the morning to meet a friend who has been away! You can't have got up, you must have sat up.

Sphynx moves aside for her husband, ERNEST. He hands Wilde a drink.

WILDE

Ernest, my dear friend, I always knew you were a man of quality. Must be why Sphynx married you.

Wilde takes a deep drink.

WILDE

Ah. Just like the warden used to make.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - LATER

Wilde regales Reginald Turner, Helen Carew, More Adey, Herbert Tree and James Whistler with a story.

Sphynx and Robbie stand in a corner.

SPHYNX

Robbie. He's back. It's the start of a rebirth.

Robbie frowns.

ROBBIE

I wish it were so. I'm afraid it's just the start of the end.

SPHYNX

(whispering)

How can you say that? This is our Oscar we're talking about. Look at how they love him.

ROBBIE

Yes, but they loved him before. What about the Queensberrys of the world?

SPHYNX

Forget about him. He is a petty man with wounded pride.

ROBBIE

True. But there are more like him in the world than our friends here. Oscar reminds them of all the chances they've missed. All the life they haven't lived. All the rules they haven't broken. And it...he infuriates them.

Sphynx looks back at Wilde. He has the entire room relaxed and laughing.

SPHYNX

I think you're wrong. I think our old Oscar is back.

ROBBIE

No. This is a new Oscar. Without the armor of hubris -- he is now the world's whipping boy.

EXT. DOCKSIDE, DOVER - DAY

Wilde and Robbie stand by a ship. A porter picks up Wilde's one suitcase.

Wilde reaches into his pocket.

WILDE

Thank you, young man.

Wilde then reaches into the inside pocket of his jacket. He pulls out a lead soldier. Robbie tips the porter.

WILDE

Again, you rescue me. You are truly the most faithful friend I have.

ROBBIE

And you are your worst enemy.

Wilde accepts the admonishment and smiles.

ROBBIE

I mean it, Oscar. Try to stay away from those who will drag you down into their depths.

Wilde feigns an astonished look.

WILDE

Why Robbie. You seem to have someone in mind.

ROBBIE

And you do too, and that's what worries me. This could be the beginning of a new, enlightened life for you.

WILDE

I am optimistic it is so.

Robbie offers his hand.

ROBBIE

It's not optimism that will protect you.

Wilde pulls him in for a hug.

WILDE

I am not who I used to be.

Ross pulls away, but Wilde holds on to him.

ROBBIE

Then why do I feel sure you'll break my heart?

EXT. DOCKSIDE, DIEPPE - EVENING

SUPER: DIEPPE, FRANCE

A porter brings Wilde's bag. Wilde reaches into his pocket, but another hand slips the porter a tip.

Wilde looks up to see Bosie.

WILDE

Bosie. It certainly is a surprise to see you.

BOSIE

Is it? A pleasant one I'm sure.

A driver picks up Wilde's bag. Bosie loops an arm through Wilde's and leads him toward the carriage.

BOSIE

You must be famished. Let's have a nice meal, a few drinks, and you can tell me your plans. We'll be extravagant.

WILDE

I can no longer afford extravagance.

BOSIE

Then it will be my pleasure.

INT. DIEPPE CAFE - NIGHT

A bottle of absinthe on the table. Wilde and Bosie sit among empty plates.

BOSIE

It must have been horrible. How you have suffered.

Wilde finishes the cloudy liquid in his glass.

WILDE

More than many more guilty than I, less than most more innocent. Prison is the ultimate socialism. You understand the equality of life because it persists around you. Regardless of how hard you try to suppress it.

Bosie moves the absinthe from Wilde.

BOSIE

This is nonsense. The absinthe is talking. You had nothing in common with those murderers, thieves and hooligans.

Wilde brings the absinthe back and prepares another glass.

WILDE

No. I am quite aware of my history.

He takes a drink. A waiter loiters by the table.

BOSIE

You must stop drinking, Oscar.

WILDE

Sebastian. Sebastian Melmoth. I don't know this Oscar you speak of.

BOSIE

You're becoming maudlin. The absinthe has affected your judgment.

Wilde holds up the glass, swilling the contents.

WILDE

No. Absinthe is like life. After the first glass you see things as you wish they were. After the second, you see them as they are not. Finally you see things as they really are, and that is the most horrible thing in the world.

The MANAGER arrives at the table.

MANAGER

Excuse me, sir. Are you the writer Oscar Wilde?

Wilde stares into his glass.

WILDE

Not any more.

MANAGER

I'm afraid I will have to ask you to pay your bill and leave.

Wilde nods wearily and pushes himself back in the chair. Bosie points at the Manager.

BOSIE

You sir, are not fit to polish this man's shoes.

MANAGER

Oh, is that so, sir? And you must be another....

Wilde holds up his hand as several other men gather around the table.

WILDE

Please. Let's not argue. Especially as the stakes are so small. As you said, Bosie, I am done with the absinthe.

Bosie throws money onto the table. Wilde bows to the manager and waiter.

WILDE

Thank you, gentlemen, for your famous French food, spirits, and hospitality.

Wilde stumbles out with Bosie.

INT. MONASTERY CAFETERIA - EVENING

A long table of BOYS eat like wild animals, except for Vyvyan.

BOY #1 stuffs bread into his mouth before he talks.

BOY #1

My father's coming over break. We'll have a whole week together.

BOY #2
What does he do?

BOY #1
I don't know. I've never met him. But
he's taking me fishing.

BOY #2
That sounds nice.

BOY #1
What about your father?

BOY #2
He's dead. Mother too. But Brother Jerome
scheduled a football match for Saturday.
It should be loads of fun.

Boy #2 turns to Vyvyan.

BOY #2
What about your father, Vyvyan? Is he
coming to visit?

Vyvyan chokes on his food.

VYVYAN
Uh. No. He's very busy just now.

BOY #2
With what?

VYVYAN
Uh. The government. The English
government.

BOY #2
That sounds exciting.

BOY #1
What does he do for the government?

VYVYAN
He's involved with the prisons.

BOY #1
A magistrate?

VYVYAN
No. More of a consultant.
(warming to the subject)
He runs all of the prisons for the entire
country.

BOY #2

I don't think I'd want that job. It sounds exhausting!

Vyvyan stares at his food.

EXT. HOTEL ST. GERMAIN - MORNING

Wilde and Bosie stand beside suitcases, hungover. Bosie looks toward the Hotel while Wilde casually smokes.

BOSIE

How dare they do this to us?

WILDE

They didn't do this to us. I am a pariah. Even as Sebastian Melmoth I am an outcast.

Bosie strains a laugh. He rubs Wilde's arm.

BOSIE

Don't worry about it. We'll go to Florence a little earlier than I thought, that's all.

Wilde hands an opened letter to Bosie.

BOSIE

What is this?

Wilde continues to smoke. Bosie pulls the letter from the envelope. His face ashen as he reads.

BOSIE

She can't do this!

WILDE

Oh yes she can.

Bosie reads aloud from the letter.

BOSIE

"If you should choose to resume your friendship with Bosie I shall be forced to stop paying you an allowance... and if you still wish to be a family I insist you sever any ties to that part of your life which caused these problems." So am I now the problem which caused your downfall?

Wilde removes a piece of tobacco from his tongue. He retrieves the envelope.

WILDE

You always were, dear boy. Don't you understand? I spent all my money and time on you, and I'm now homeless, bankrupt, and without a family.

BOSIE

You wouldn't have spent so much time with me if you were such a devoted family man.

WILDE

True. But that's what I should be. I haven't seen my sons in two years. It's a disgrace.

BOSIE

The domestic life doesn't suit you. Besides, we don't have to be homeless. We can travel.

WILDE

With what? I can no longer support you. And as soon as your father hears of us, he'll no longer support you.

Bosie takes his bag to the street and pouts on the curb. He waves down a carriage.

BOSIE

When you've finally come to your senses you'll understand that I'm the only one who always defended you - and I have suffered for it. You can visit me in Florence. If I'm still there.

Wilde grabs his suitcase and steps past Bosie as the carriage arrives. He enters the carriage and closes the door on Bosie.

WILDE

Enjoy Florence.

The carriage pulls away leaving Bosie at the curb.

INT. MONACO CATHEDRAL - MORNING

SUPER: ONE MONTH LATER

Vyvyan kneels in the back pew, eyes closed. FATHER ANTONIO slides beside him. Vyvyan peeks out of one eye.

Father Antonio smiles. Vyvyan crosses himself and looks at Father with a hopeful expression.

VYVYAN

Well?

FATHER ANTONIO

I'm sorry Vyvyan.

Vyvyan deflates.

VYVYAN

Because I'm protestant.

FATHER ANTONIO

That is part of it. But the larger reason is because your mother is Protestant, and hasn't given permission.

Vyvyan looks to the ornate virgin-white statues and vivid stained glass windows.

VYVYAN

It's not fair. All the other boys get to take first communion.

FATHER ANTONIO

Yes. But they're all Catholic. At least we think they are. And this is a Catholic church.

VYVYAN

I just feel like...such a...a....

FATHER ANTONIO

Outcast?

Vyvyan nods his head.

FATHER ANTONIO

May I bore you with another of my stories?

Father Antonio leans against the back of the pew and places an arm behind Vyvyan.

FATHER ANTONIO

Some of the boys wouldn't believe this, but I wasn't born a priest. I came to the Brothers as a baby. My mother didn't want me. Wait. That may not be true. My mother felt she couldn't keep me, so she left me here with the brothers.

Father Antonio brings both hands in front of him, palms up, and makes a shrug.

FATHER ANTONIO

She was unmarried. She decided the brothers were the best caretakers she could think of.

Father Antonio laughs, and shakes his head.

FATHER ANTONIO

I'm not so sure she was thinking clearly. I could think of better surrogate mothers than a bunch of celibate Catholic brothers.

Vyvyan laughs now, too.

FATHER ANTONIO

But they raised me. And I learned to help with the mass. Then came the day for first communion. There was confusion -- was I Catholic? I couldn't know. The brothers didn't know. So it was decided I should wait a year. The brothers felt time would decide the issue.

Father Antonio ruffles the hair on the back of Vyvyan's head and stands.

VYVYAN

And?

FATHER ANTONIO

And what?

VYVYAN

Did you take first communion the next year?

Father Antonio nods his head.

FATHER ANTONIO

I did.

The comment doesn't appease Vyvyan. He turns his attention back to the plaster saints.

FATHER ANTONIO

I know it's difficult, waiting is never easy. Especially for the young. But first communion is not just a social function. Changing religions is not something to take lightly.

Father Antonio looks around the cathedral.

FATHER ANTONIO
Look where it's landed me.

EXT. MONASTERY GROUNDS - DAY

SUPER: APRIL, 1898

Students surround a brother who distributes mail. Vyvyan (12) maneuvers to the front. The brother passes packages and envelopes over and around Vyvyan.

When only a few packages are left, Father Antonio pulls Vyvyan away from the others.

FATHER ANTONIO
We must talk.

VYVYAN
Please, Father. I want to see if I've received a letter from Mother.

Father Antonio gently pulls Vyvyan to a bench.

FATHER ANTONIO
My child, were you aware your mother has been sick?

Vyvyan follows the Father's eye to study birds in the sky.

VYVYAN
My mother is dead, isn't she?

Father Antonio continues to look straight ahead. He clears his throat.

FATHER ANTONIO
Yes, Vyvyan.

As the tears come, Vyvyan turns his face. Father Antonio pulls Vyvyan against his shoulder. Vyvyan cries harder.

FATHER ANTONIO
There is no shame in grief.

After a few moments Vyvyan controls his crying and sits up straight.

VYVYAN
Does my father know?

FATHER ANTONIO

I don't know.

VYVYAN

He's in prison, isn't he?

FATHER ANTONIO

He was, but he's free now.

Vyvyan and Father Antonio silently lean against one another.

VYVYAN

Will she go to heaven?

FATHER ANTONIO

Yes.

VYVYAN

Will she truly?

Father Antonio turns Vyvyan's face to his.

FATHER ANTONIO

Of course. Your mother was a wonderful woman.

VYVYAN

But she was Protestant.

FATHER ANTONIO

Vyvyan. God does not divide his children by their church, but by their actions.

VYVYAN

Do you miss your father...and mother.

FATHER ANTONIO

No.

Vyvyan turns to Father Antonio.

FATHER ANTONIO

How could I miss what I never had? Sometimes, when I see the boys rush up to their parents, I wonder what that must feel like -- more from the parents perspective at my age. I've seen it. I understand unconditional love. But it's a connection I've not experienced first hand. It's like faith.

VYVYAN

You do have faith, don't you father?

FATHER ANTONIO

Of course, Vyvyan. I only meant it's like...it's like God. You don't have to witness it yourself in order to believe in it. And like God, it's powerful, and confusing.

EXT. GRAND HOTEL RESTAURANT, NAPLES - MORNING

SUPER: NAPLES, ITALY

Wilde (43) and Bosie (30) drink coffee on the hotel veranda overlooking the bay. Wilde reads a paper while Bosie writes.

Bosie finishes a line with a flourish. He beams.

BOSIE

I've finished my poem. You must read it.

Wilde lowers his paper.

WILDE

Ah. The masterpiece is finished, is it?

An Italian CONCIERGE, steps to their table.

CONCIERGE

Mr. Melmoth?

Wilde squints from the sunlight.

WILDE

Yes?

CONCIERGE

I have a telegram for you, sir.

Bosie slides his poem to Wilde.

BOSIE

It's really quite good.

The Concierge keeps his attention trained on Wilde.

CONCIERGE

It's important, sir. Maybe you should take it in a drawing room.

BOSIE

You have it right there don't you? Just give it to him.

The Concierge ignores Bosie.

CONCIERGE

Sir. I believe you will want to handle this privately.

Wilde leaves with the Concierge.

Bosie picks up Wilde's paper and roughly opens it.

INT. DRAWING ROOM

The Concierge opens a large mahogany door.

CONCIERGE

I thought you might like some privacy.

Wilde studies the Concierge's eyes, then accepts the telegram.

Wilde paces the well-appointed room. He eventually stops by a window and looks onto the bay.

He sighs and opens the telegram:

ROBBIE (V.O.)

My Dearest Friend. There is no proper way to tell you this, as I know the affect it will have on you. So I'll get on - Constance is dead. She has been sick for some time, but didn't want you burdened with the knowledge. The children, per her wish, will be transported to her family. As of yet, I have no further details. I'm sorry I couldn't be there to tell you - to try to abate the pain. Know that I am there with you in spirit. Your friend, Robbie.

Wilde drops the telegram. He leans against the glass and weeps.

He falls to his knees, face against the wall, and sobs uncontrollably.

INT. AUNT LIZZIE'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM, LONDON - DAY

Vyvyan sits beside Cyril (13) on a couch. His great-aunt MARY, stately and cold, Aunt LIZZIE, and the OFFICIAL GUARDIAN, sit rigidly across from them.

The Official Guardian clears his throat in an authoritative, showy way.

GUARDIAN

Cyril. Vyvyan. I am the executor of your mother's estate. I will make sure your needs are fulfilled. I am not a caregiver. That responsibility falls to aunts. I shall leave you to their excellent care now. I just wanted you to know, as orphans

(beat)

you shall not be abandoned.

Vyvyan and Cyril hands move until they barely touch.

The Guardian stands. He gestures around the room.

OFFICIAL GUARDIAN

So you see, you are quite well cared for. You shall want for nothing of importance. I wish you well.

The aunts follow him to the door. When they clear the room, Cyril turns to Vyvyan.

CYRIL

Did you know?

VYVYAN

It must have been recent. Father Antonio just told me he was out of prison.

INT. AUNT LIZZIE'S HOUSE, DOOR

The Official Guardian and the aunts converse quietly.

LIZZIE

So he's dead?

OFFICIAL GUARDIAN

I didn't say that. I said they were orphans.

LIZZIE

What's the difference?

MARY

For all purposes he is dead to them.

The Official Guardian hands Mary a crumpled letter.

OFFICIAL GUARDIAN

I recently received this. Sorry for the condition, it travelled through many hands before it got to me.

Aunt Mary opens the letter and scans it.

MARY

Hasn't he done enough? Why can't he leave them alone?

LIZZIE

Who?

MARY

Desolating the family name, killing poor Constance, and now he wants to see them.

LIZZIE

Oscar?

Aunt Mary and the Official Guardian scowl at Lizzie.

LIZZIE

How will we tell them?

OFFICIAL GUARDIAN

Tell them what?

LIZZIE

That their father is alive!

MARY

We don't tell them. He doesn't exist, remember?

Mary rips the letter in half and hands it back to the Guardian.

OFFICIAL GUARDIAN

That pesky friend of his, Ross, has been asking to see them, also.

MARY

No... No... Definitely not.

LIZZIE

Why not?

Mary glares at Lizzie.

MARY

They can no longer think of themselves as Wildes. That family no longer exists. They are Hollands.

INT. AUNT LIZZIE'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM

Vyvyan pulls a book from the bookshelf. He shows the spine to Cyril: *The Happy Prince*. He turns it to show the name Oscar Wilde obliterated from the front.

Mary and Lizzie enter the room. Mary replaces the book.

MARY

The family has made arrangements for each of you. You will leave next week. Cyril, you will go to an academy. Vyvyan, by your mother's wishes, you shall attend a Catholic school - Stonybrook.

Cyril and Vyvyan nod solemnly.

INT. HOTEL D'ALSACE, WILDE'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

SUPER: HOTEL D'ALSACE, NOVEMBER, 1900 (Two years later)

Robbie Ross (32) stands in the corner by the window. Reginald Turner (32) sits by Wilde's bed as he sleeps.

Wilde (45) awakes and smiles at Turner. Robbie moves to the foot of the bed.

WILDE

Last night I dreamed that I was dining with the damned souls in hell.

REGINALD

No doubt you were the life and soul of the party.

Wilde's laugh turns into convulsive coughs. The coughs RATTLE. He tries to speak, but cannot.

ROBBIE

Oscar. I've brought the priest you wanted. His name is Father Dunne. Would you like to see him?

Wilde again tries to speak, but when he cannot he just raises his hand. Robbie opens the door and invites Father Dunne into the room.

A baby-faced FATHER DUNNE moves beside Wilde.

FATHER DUNNE

Do you wish to be received into the Holy Catholic Church?

Wilde again raises his hand after trying to speak.

ROBBIE

That means yes.

Father Dunne looks skeptically at Ross.

ROBBIE

He has lost the ability to speak.

Dunne motions Ross to the corner.

FATHER DUNNE

This is not something to be taken lightly. He has to be totally committed to conversion or I can't give him the sacraments.

ROBBIE

His soul is committed, but his body is broken.

FATHER DUNNE

He must answer the question or I cannot continue.

ROBBIE

I denied him once, I can't do it again. He asked me to help him convert to the church several years ago in Rome. I thought it was another of his eccentricities....

FATHER DUNNE

How do you know it's not?

ROBBIE

I don't. But he thinks his soul depends on it. He's the greatest friend I've ever known, and I'm not ready to bet his soul.

FATHER DUNNE

Still, he must answer the questions.

Robbie moves next to Wilde.

ROBBIE

Oscar. To say yes raise your right hand.
To say no raise your left hand. Do you
understand?

Wilde raises his right hand.

Dunne pulls a small vial of holy water from his robe. He
pours a bit onto Wilde's forehead. The water runs like
tears across his face.

FATHER DUNNE

Dost thou renounce Satan? And all his
works? And all his pomps?

EXT. STONYBROOK SCHOOL, FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

A YOUNG BROTHER follows along the edge of the pitch,
changing direction with the ball. He waves to get
Vyvyan's attention. Finally he yells at Vyvyan.

Vyvyan (14) stops and is run over by another boy. Vyvyan
stands and brushes himself off. He weaves between boys to
the Brother.

VYVYAN

Yes, brother?

YOUNG BROTHER

Father Ignacious wishes to see you.

INT. FATHER IGNACIOUS' OFFICE

FATHER IGNACIOUS reads behind a large dark desk full of
papers and books, feet propped on the one empty space of
the desk.

As Vyvyan enters, Ignacious marks his place and searches
for a place to set the book.

Eventually he jams the book above others on his
overstuffed bookshelf. He shakes Vyvyan's hand and
motions for him to sit.

FATHER IGNACIOUS

I'm sorry Vyvyan, but I have some very
disturbing news for you.

He leans forward, shoulders hunched.

FATHER IGNACIOUS

Rather than delay your suspense, I shall tell you, although there is no easy way... Your father has died.

Vyvyan jumps in his chair. Father Ignacious sits on the edge of the crowded desk in front of Vyvyan.

Papers tumble as he clears a place to sit.

VYVYAN

There must be some mistake.

FATHER IGNACIOUS

I'm sorry, Vyvyan. I know this must come as a great shock, but from what I understand he has been sick for some time.

VYVYAN

No, Father. He has been dead for some time.

FATHER IGNACIOUS

What?

VYVYAN

My father died over a year ago.

Father Ignacious takes a newspaper from his desk. He searches his pocket and desk for his glasses. Eventually finding them on his head.

FATHER IGNACIOUS

It was in the paper just this morning.

Vyvyan reads the paper. He begins to cry.

VYVYAN

I don't understand.

FATHER IGNACIOUS

I know, my son. After being separated for so long... But why did you think he was already dead?

VYVYAN

That's what the family told me.

Father Ignacious stammers, turns to the bookcase.

FATHER IGNACIOUS

He was a great writer.

VYVYAN
So I've been told.

Father Ignacious searches the overly stuffed bookshelf.

FATHER IGNACIOUS
Now where was it? Where did I put...ah,
here it is.

He pulls a small leather book from the bookshelf.

FATHER IGNACIOUS
Maybe you can find some comfort in this.
I've always loved the book myself.

Vyvyan turns the book over to read:

The Happy Prince by Oscar Wilde.

Vyvyan opens the book and begins to read.

WILDE (V.O.)
High above the city, on a tall column,
stood the statue of the Happy Prince. He
was gilded all over with thin leaves of
fine gold, for eyes he had two bright
sapphires, and a large red ruby glowed on
his sword-hilt.

INT. HELEN CAREW'S HOUSE, LIBRARY - EVENING

SUPER: JULY, 1907

Vyvyan (21) steps into a stately library with COLERIDGE
KINNARD.

Vyvyan examines books on the shelves while Coleridge
lounges in a chair.

COLERIDGE
I should have known this would be the
fascination of coming home with me.

Mrs. Helen Carew, now 42, sweeps into the room,
exquisitely dressed.

MRS. CAREW
Vyvyan, dear boy. I'm Helen Carew.

Vyvyan offers his hand, but Mrs. Carew kisses both
cheeks, then holds him at arms-length.

MRS. CAREW

I see your father in you. But also a trace of your mother. Especially in the eyes.

Mrs. Carew leads him to the bookcase.

MRS. CAREW

I noticed you admiring my books.

VYVYAN

You have a very impressive collection.

Mrs. Carew pulls him to a section.

MRS. CAREW

I think you'll be more interested in these.

She pulls a copy of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. She opens it to the inscription.

VYVYAN

My father inscribed it for you?

Mrs. Carew gestures to a section of books.

MRS. CAREW

He sent me copies of every book he ever wrote. Except, of course, *De Profundis*. Robbie Ross dedicated the book to me since he was the editor, and your father had already... After I told Robbie you were my son's roommate, he affirmed his desire to see you.

VYVYAN

Who?

MRS. CAREW

Robbie. Robbie Ross.

Vyvyan stares blankly at her.

MRS. CAREW

Don't tell me you don't know Robbie Ross?

Vyvyan shakes his head.

VYVYAN

The family would never talk of my father. Or his friends.

Mrs. Carew sympathetically shakes her head at Vyvyan.

MRS. CAREW

Robbie has been your father's literary executor since his death. He has forever been a steadfast friend. By his side even up to his....

Mrs. Carew plasters on a big smile.

MRS. CAREW

You must stay for dinner. I shall tell you everything I know about your father. Well, maybe not everything.

She takes Vyvyan's arm.

MRS. CAREW

Come along, Coleridge.

Coleridge extricates himself from the chair. He follows Vyvyan and Mrs. Carew out the door.

COLERIDGE

Don't worry, Vyvyan. The conversation will never wane when your father is the subject.

EXT. KENSINGTON STREET - EVENING

Vyvyan and Cyril hurry under the shimmering light of gas lamps to a charming Victorian house.

INT. ROBBIE ROSS' HOUSE, FOYER

Robbie Ross, now 40 and balding, rushes past the maid to answer the door. He yells over his shoulder.

ROBBIE

They're here!

Robbie opens the door wide, and gestures emphatically.

ROBBIE

Come in, come in, come in, come in.

Vyvyan enters first. Cyril slides inside the door. Vyvyan offers his hand.

VYVYAN

Vyvyan Holland, sir.

Robbie Ross smiles and takes Vyvyan's hand. Tears form in his eyes.

ROBBIE

I would know you anywhere, on any street.
Helen was right. You have so much of your
father in you. And luckily enough of your
mother to soften the effect.

He hugs Vyvyan in a fatherly way, though Vyvyan is much
taller. Vyvyan pulls away, but Robbie holds tight.

ROBBIE

(in Vyvyan's ear)

I've waited a long time for this. It is
my sincerest hope we shall become fast
friends.

Robbie turns to Cyril.

ROBBIE

And you must be Cyril.

He moves toward Cyril with arms open. Cyril steps into a
coat tree while holding out his hand. Robbie chuckles and
shakes Cyril's hand.

Mrs. Carew runs into the foyer.

MRS. CAREW

Oh good, you made it. You must come meet
the others.

Robbie leads them toward the dining room.

ROBBIE

Welcome to my home!

More Adey, thin hair and a full, bushy beard steps around
the corner.

MORE ADEY

Our home.

ROBBIE

More. These are Oscar's boys. Vyvyan and
Cyril.

More Adey smiles winningly at Cyril and Vyvyan.

MORE ADEY

Of course they are.

INT. ROBBIE ROSS' HOUSE, DINING ROOM

Sphynx, Earnest, Reginald Turner, Helen Carew, More Adey, Herbert Tree and Robbie Ross surround a table filled with food and wine.

When a maid tries to fill Vyvyan's wine glass, Ross takes the bottle and fills it himself.

Cyril laughs, mouth full of food, gets embarrassed and laughs again. Robbie raises his glass.

ROBBIE ROSS

It's a shame James couldn't be with us.

(to Vyvyan)

Whistler. He passed on three years ago.

MORE ADEY

From what I understand his paintings are selling better though.

SPHYNX

Of course they are. Now that you don't have to listen to his commentary.

More Adey holds up his empty glass for Ross to fill.

ROBBIE

I remember a party for one of Whistler's openings. James was on one of his tirades. He made a particularly witty remark - even for James. Oscar turned to me and in a voice he thought was private said, "I wish I'd said that." Whistler, without missing a beat said, "Don't worry Oscar, you will. You will."

More leaps to his feet.

MORE ADEY

I have an Oscar story. I was there at the opening night of Lady Windermere's Fan. Oscar suggested Webster should wear a green carnation on stage. Webster argued that green carnations do not exist. "True," said Oscar, "but they will; Nature always copies Art and it is our duty to teach Nature how to behave." That night, Webster wore a green carnation.

More sits back and toasts the guests. Robbie places a hand on More's shoulder and More pats his hand. Herbert Tree takes the bait.

TREE

Well I remember when Oscar brought this young man to a play of mine when he was just a little thing.

(points to Vyvyan)

It was a collection of children's fantasies. Oscar brought him backstage to show him off. I was so tongue-tied I couldn't think of what to say, so I asked him if he had seen his father's play A Woman of No Importance. He looks me straight in the eye, and with the face of an angel tells me: Sorry sir, but no. My mother tells me the play contains certain epigrams which are not right for children to hear.

Everyone laughs except Vyvyan who lowers his head. More slaps him on the shoulder. He laughs with everyone else.

Robbie ruffles Vyvyan's hair.

The group continues stories about Wilde.

VYVYAN (V.O.)

Story by story the puzzle of my father became clearer. No longer was he just the father who built sand castles, nor the beast whispered about. These people told of a loving father, devoted friend, and confused soul. We talked until the early morning hours and there was never a lull in conversation. Robbie Ross' wish for us to become fast friends came true. This was indeed a blessing. This group in front of me may have been an improbable lot, but no one could ask for a more supportive family. It had taken me 21 long years to find my place in life. I was lucky. Some people never do.

Robbie Ross stands, wine glass raised.

ROBBIE

To Oscar Wilde.

FADE OUT.