

TAINTED BLOOD

by Tom Jacobson

Playwrights Ink  
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CAST OF CHARACTERS

OSCAR WILDE, 24, an attractive professor of aesthetics

TY, 18, an angelic cockney groom

PROF. DVAPARA, 29, a handsome Indian mesmerist

FLORENCE BALCOMBE, 20, Oscar's beautiful fiancée

OCTAVIA BALCOMBE, 55, Florence's stolid aunt

MISS CAMILLA QUIMBY, 22, Oscar's lusty housemaid

BRAM STOKER, 31, a tall, red-headed acting manager

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, 19, an intellectual medical student

The action takes place in the Victorian drawing room of Moytura, the Wilde family country home on the shore of Lough Corrib in Ireland. It is late September, 1878.

#### PROLOGUE

A graveyard

#### ACT I

A drawing room

The wee hours of the morning

#### ACT II

The same

The next evening

#### ACT III

The same

Later that night

SETTING: Upstage double panelled doors lead to a hallway. Downstage two sets of French doors face each other from opposite sides of the stage. The French doors are framed by heavy velvet drapes with gauzy sheer draperies beneath. The rest of the room is dark and Victorian, lit by gas lamps. The furniture includes a bookcase, a large cupboard or wardrobe, and a couch or settee. For the Prologue, the graveyard may be represented through lighting and a headstone or two.

## PROLOGUE (Optional)

A single gas streetlamp dimly illuminates a run-down Gaelic graveyard late at night. A well-dressed GENTLEMAN comes warily into the cemetery, looking anxiously for someone. Seeing no one, he settles down to wait, fidgeting nervously. Looking down at the ground he notices something lying there, watches it a moment, then picks it up. It is a worm. He takes a handkerchief from his pocket and puts the worm in it. He searches the ground until he finds another worm and adds it to his collection. He continues finding worms and does not notice an angelic BOY come into the cemetery. Dressed in dirty work clothes, the BOY is also nervous, glancing about furtively until he sees the MAN. The BOY relaxes; amused by the MAN'S worm-gathering, he assumes an air of smug nonchalance and stares at the MAN. Finally the MAN notices the BOY and freezes. He puts the handkerchief of worms in his pocket and stands. He and the BOY stare at each other, challenging each other to make the first move. Behind the BOY a FIGURE appears, barely distinguishable among the shadows. The MAN starts to take a step toward the BOY then freezes again when he sees the FIGURE. The BOY, puzzled, turns to follow the MAN'S gaze, sees the FIGURE and starts to bolt. But he stops and turns back to the FIGURE, staring at it as if hypnotized. He takes a few slow steps toward the FIGURE, hesitates, then approaches the FIGURE in awe. The BOY reaches out and touches the FIGURE'S voluminous dark cape, stroking the luxurious fabric with a combination of veneration and desire. The FIGURE does not move. The BOY turns back for a moment and looks almost dismissively at the MAN, then disappears behind a tall headstone with the FIGURE. The MAN runs away. From behind the tombstone comes a sharp cry of pain mingled with ecstasy.

ACT I

FLORENCE BALCOMBE, 20, a beautiful dark-haired woman, reclines languidly on a couch or settee in an

oppressively Victorian drawing room. Across the room her rather monumental aunt, OCTAVIA BALCOMBE, 55, sits rigidly in an overstuffed chair, reading a thick book. OCTAVIA'S most distinguishing feature is her enormous mound of bouffant hair. They do not speak. FLORENCE is almost asleep; OCTAVIA is stonily silent. Into this silence through the hall doors bursts a golden-haired maid, MISS CAMILLA QUIMBY, a lusty, lively wench. She carries an elegant plate of sandwiches and offers one to OCTAVIA.

MISS QUIMBY

(Cockney.)  
Sandwich, mum?

OCTAVIA

(Stentorian.)  
Cucumber?

MISS QUIMBY

Watercress, mum.

OCTAVIA rudely returns to her book.

OCTAVIA

Kept awake all hours with no cucumber sandwiches. Your Mr. Wilde is most thoughtless, most thoughtless indeed. Ireland in September! Pfff!

MISS QUIMBY offers a sandwich to FLORENCE, who politely refuses.

FLORENCE

(Tired, but gracious.)  
But, Aunt, green is your favorite color. You adore it.

MISS QUIMBY takes the plate to a corner and eats a sandwich with relish.

AVIA

in abide is a cucumber sandwich and there are none present.  
to chaperone your next excursion to this wretched island.

FLORENCE

Aunt, I miss London as well. But Oscar's been terribly moody since he graduated, so I beg you--

OSCAR WILDE, 24, rushes in through the hall door. He is dressed quite elegantly, is dark-haired and interesting-looking, and speaks and gestures passionately with quick humor.

OSCAR

Dreadfully sorry! No answer at the rectory, so we must assume our Professor Dvapara is either on his way or has been devoured by the legendary monster of the Lough.

(He goes to OCTAVIA.)

Mrs. Balcombe, has Miss Quimby made you comfortable for our grand diversion?

OCTAVIA

My dear Mr. Wilde, it is not possible for human persons to be comfortable at this forsaken hour in anything other than a recumbent posture. If your conjurer does not arrive within the half hour, I must insist you release me to my room.

OSCAR

Absolutely, Mrs. Balcombe.

(He goes to FLORENCE and kneels, taking her hand.)

My darling, don't go to sleep yet. Where are Bram and Arthur?

FLORENCE

They've gone in search of you.

OSCAR

Not far, I hope. Professor Dvapara will be here soon and we'll have a delightful evening.

FLORENCE

(Smiling tiredly.)

Oscar, we're about to have a delightful morning.

OSCAR

(Taking out his handkerchief.)

I've brought you a gift to stimulate you to wakefulness. Death itself!

OSCAR dangles a worm in front of her.

FLORENCE

(Leaping up.)  
Oh, Oscar! Take it away! A worm!

OCTAVIA  
Disgusting! Pfff!

FLORENCE  
It's wriggling most unpleasantly!

OCTAVIA  
Bordering on undulation!

OSCAR  
(Laughing.)  
Florence, darling, worms don't bite. While we live.

FLORENCE  
Nonetheless it's slimy and a lurid color.

OSCAR  
It's pink.

FLORENCE  
The color of flesh.

OSCAR  
(Musing.)  
I did find it in the churchyard.

OCTAVIA  
Pray don't make light of mortality, Mr. Wilde.

OSCAR  
Certainly not. It's the one thing that makes life bearable.

FLORENCE  
Oscar, you've developed a most unhealthy preoccupation with death.

OSCAR  
(Placing the worm back in the handkerchief.)  
No, my dear. I'm preoccupied with symbolism.

OCTAVIA  
(Rising grandly.)  
Mr. Wilde, I shall now retire. Should I dream of larvae, I blame your unusual

amusements.

OSCAR

No, no, stay! The mesmerist will arrive shortly, I promise!

FLORENCE

Promise?

OSCAR

(Leaves the worms on the bookcase, goes to FLORENCE.)

Lady, by yonder glorious moon I swear, that tips with silver all these orchard boughs--

FLORENCE

(Turns to him, smiling as she accuses him.)

Paraphrase! A fine aesthetician you are!

They start to kiss, then notice OCTAVIA staring at them, and stop.

OSCAR

(To OCTAVIA.)

Madame, I beg your forbearance.

OCTAVIA

Pfff!

When OCTAVIA turns away, OSCAR tries to steal a kiss from FLORENCE, but BRAM STOKER hurries into the room. BRAM, 31, is a tall red-headed and red-bearded fellow, very down-to-earth. Following him is a slim medical student, ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, 19, who is carrying a stone sivalinga.

BRAM

Wilde, haven't missed it all, have we?

OSCAR

Not at all. Professor Dvapara appears to have disappeared. Arthur, what are you doing with my sivalinga?

BRAM

He noticed it in the hallway and became obsessed with it.

OSCAR



Look, Florence--another symbol.

FLORENCE

Symbols, symbols, symbols! Give me something actual!

ARTHUR

Third century A.D., isn't it?

OCTAVIA

What does it symbolize, Mr. Wilde?

Embarrassed pause. The linga, although stubby, is distinctly phallic.

OSCAR

Fertility, dear lady. The Hindoos anoint it with milk and clarified butter as a form of worship.

ARTHUR

If this mesmerist's an Indian, perhaps he'll demonstrate for us.

BRAM

We don't need some darky to show us. Wilde's a published expert in ancient mumbo-jumbo.

FLORENCE

Mr. Stoker, don't be a sycophant.

OSCAR

As Florence frequently reminds me, I'm just a plagiarist.

OSCAR AND FLORENCE

But a brilliant one.

(They laugh.)

BRAM

But the Newdigate poetry prize--

OSCAR

(Interrupting BRAM, as he picks up a piece of furniture.)

Help me arrange this for the mesmerist, my good fellow?

(BRAM helps OSCAR rearrange the furniture.)

MISS QUIMBY

(To ARTHUR, seductively.)

Sandwich, sir?

ARTHUR

(Bewitched, he puts down the linga.)  
Why no, I mean, yes, thanks very--much, yes.

BRAM

(Taking a small Buddha from his pocket.)  
Do you suppose he'll appraise this for me?

MISS QUIMBY continues vamping ARTHUR.

OSCAR

A terra-cotta Buddha? Has Orientalism been demoted to fashion? I must find a new diversion.

BRAM

It was a gift.

OSCAR

I suppose you chant as well?

BRAM

(Irritated, he puts the Buddha back in his pocket.)  
He probably won't come anyway. It's far too late.

FLORENCE

My sentiments precisely, Mr. Stoker.

OSCAR

It's the only time I could get him. Such fellows are much in demand these days.

BRAM takes out a note and tries to surreptitiously hand it to FLORENCE, but she ignores him.

ARTHUR

(His mouth full.)  
Charlatans will always be popular--with the ill-educated. What nonsense! Otherworld communications, tipping tables and the like.

BRAM

(Sotto voce to OSCAR.)  
Wish I had a fiancee to compare with Florence. How's an ugly squid like you so fortunate?

OSCAR

Throw worms in her face--works miracles.

FLORENCE

No, Oscar, it's your beautiful eyes.

OSCAR

Ah, but the rest of me...

FLORENCE

(Teasing.)

You're interesting-looking.

OCTAVIA

How do you come to know so much about spiritualism, Mr. Doyle?

ARTHUR

Read a book about it, ma'am. Absolute bosh. When we die, we die.

OSCAR

Oh, dear, Bram. Arthur's evolved beyond his soul.

MISS QUIMY

An acquaintance of mine claims a medium summoned her uncle from the grave.

ARTHUR

And heard spirit knocks, no doubt?

MISS QUIMBY

Absolutely.

ARTHUR

Science proves every medium a patent fraud. Knocking is accomplished with wires and hidden panels. Ectoplasm is quite often merely mucus.

OCTAVIA

Mr. Doyle! Pfff!

ARTHUR

My apologies, ladies. I've spent the last year almost exclusively in the company of books and medical lecturers.

FLORENCE

Oscar, when this fakir arrives, do let's send him home and go straight to bed.

OSCAR

Professor Dvapara is a mesmerist, not a medium.

Suddenly TY, 18, an angelic-looking groom, hurtles in through the hall doors in a panic. He is dressed in work clothes and has a scarf wrapped tightly around his neck.

TY

(Cockney.)

Mr. Wilde, lock the door! The filthy blighter's after me!

OSCAR

Ty, we have guests--

TY

(Clutching OSCAR, much to OSCAR'S embarrassment.)

A great gamey spider, Mr. Wilde! Coming up the drive!

MISS QUIMBY

Shut it, lad! There's people of gentility about.

OSCAR

Calm yourself, Ty.

TY

I ain't lying. Tried to suck the life outta me, it did!

(OSCAR hands TY to MISS QUIMBY.)

Don't let it in!

OSCAR

We won't, Ty.

(To MISS QUIMBY.)

Please feed him--something soothing.

MISS QUIMBY

Conk him on the head with that linga-thing, that'll soothe him.

TY

(Desperately, as MISS QUIMBY drags him away.)

Promise, Mr. Wilde!

OSCAR

Trust me, Ty.

OSCAR turns back to his guests.

OSCAR

The boy's been overexcited since we came from London. He's very good with the horses, but--

OCTAVIA

Discharge him at once. Most unnerving.

BRAM

Have you seen this mesmerist perform?

ARTHUR

And were you satisfied with his authenticity?

BRAM again attempts to pass the note to FLORENCE, but she evades him. BRAM barely manages to hide the note before OSCAR looks at him.

OSCAR

Absolutely! Last week--also during the wee hours, I might add--I saw him regress a beautiful barmaid into her previous life as a duchess.

OCTAVIA

Plays havoc, no doubt, with proper genealogy.

ARTHUR

He delivered what she naturally desired: respectability and position.

BRAM

What are you saying, Doyle?

Doorbell rings. MISS QUIMBY goes out.

HUR

showmen--playing on an audience's imagination and secret volunteer as subject for this experiment?

AR

w. If he's successful with a cynic such as yourself, he deserves to

OSCAR hands BRAM the napkin of worms. In

accepting the worms, BRAM almost reveals the note.

OSCAR

Here, Bram. See if you can win Florence with these, there's a good fellow.

MISS QUIMBY

(Entering.)

Professor Dvapara.

BRAM shoves the note into FLORENCE'S hand. Angrily, she hides it in her sleeve. PROFESSOR DVAPARA, 29, is a strikingly handsome man who enters the room with an air of utmost elegance. He wears a long, full cape. Although he has an Indian complexion, in speech and dress he is quite European.

OSCAR

Professor Dvapara, welcome.

DVAPARA

(Formal, a la Bela Lugosi, but with no discernable accent.)

Good evening.

(He takes OSCAR'S hand.)

You are looking well.

OSCAR

(Staring for a moment.)

This...is my fiancee, Miss Balcombe.

DVAPARA

Miss Balcombe.

FLORENCE

(Smiling.)

Professor, I expected someone much older. Wizened with age and experience in these matters.

DVAPARA

Experience does not wizen everyone, Miss Balcombe.

OSCAR

This is Miss Balcombe's aunt, Mrs. Octavia Balcombe.

DVAPARA bows.

OCTAVIA

How charming that your speech is unencumbered by an Indian accent.

DVAPARA

I have seen the world, dear lady. I've found it most convenient to travel light.

OSCAR

And Mr. Bram Stoker, soon to be associated with the Lyceum Theater in London, and Mr. Arthur Conan Doyle.

BRAM

(Starts to shake hands, shoves worms in his jacket pocket.)

Dvapara.

ARTHUR

A Naga, are you?

DVAPARA

Proudly, sir, I claim that ancestry. You have heard of my forefathers who defended the Indus Valley against the Mughals?

ARTHUR

And decapitated their enemies to steal their souls. Do you actually believe the soul resides in the head?

OSCAR

Arthur is a medical student.

DVAPARA

Ah. And a skeptic, no doubt?

ARTHUR

Not of genealogy. But I wish to be your first subject tonight.

DVAPARA

(Smiling.)

Very well--a challenge. Please be seated.

(He indicates a chair. ARTHUR sits.)

I need but one source of light.

The others dim the gaslights. OSCAR lights a single candle and places it before ARTHUR and DVAPARA. They all take seats.

DVAPARA

I require complete silence and attention at all times. Any sound could break the trance.

ARTHUR

Dvapara, what precisely is your academic discipline?

DVAPARA

Antiquity.

OSCAR

Ah! We are colleagues!

FLORENCE

Darling, please allow the professor to begin before I become involuntarily--

(She yawns.)

Somnambulent.

DVAPARA

I apologize for the lateness of the hour. It is the only time I have found mesmerism truly effective.

ARTHUR

Exhaustion is easily confused with a trance state.

DVAPARA

(Taking out a coin.)

I am deeply appreciative of your reluctance to believe. It will make your surrender infinitely more credible.

ARTHUR

(Indicating the coin.)

Fourth-century Gupta, is it?

DVAPARA

(Flashing the coin in the light.)

Very observant.

BRAM

But it looks newly minted!

DVAPARA



(Hypnotically.)

It is an heirloom given me by my father, and to him by his father, continuing back through generations of Dvaparas to the original Naga tribes. From a time before barbaric races overran us--Aryans, Macedonians, Sakas, Mauryans, and Bactrians.

Everyone is extraordinarily attentive. ARTHUR'S eyes have begun to glaze over, and FLORENCE leans forward in her chair, staring.

DVAPARA

My remaining relatives slaughtered by British soldiers in the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. I have wandered the earth for untold years, endured cruelties beyond the ken of sensate flesh and ecstasies that would kill an ordinary man. The cultures of the world are mine, yet I abandoned all to settle on this fair isle--among an ancient race that would honor my blood. Soon I will no longer merely mesmerize Englishmen for their amusement, but live among you as I ought. Mr. Doyle?

(He closes his fist over the coin. ARTHUR is hypnotized.)

ARTHUR

Yes.

DVAPARA

I want you to remember a time when you were ten years old. Can you recall it?

(ARTHUR frowns. FLORENCE nods solemnly.)

Do you remember before that, when you were a babe?

(ARTHUR and FLORENCE nod.)

You must go back further, inside your mother's womb, when you were but an homunculus. And further still, before this life began--before your previous death.

ARTHUR begins to giggle quietly, but foolishly, as if he were insane. At the same time, FLORENCE'S body twists into a distorted position.

DVAPARA

Where were you before this life? What are your thoughts?

FLORENCE

(Bursts out in a cracked voice, startling everyone.)

I'm old!!

(They all turn to her, but ARTHUR keeps giggling quietly.)

I'm hideously ugly! A foolish old woman! My skin is tortured with wrinkles and they've filled this cell with mirrors. My lips, once red and full, now pale and dry. Why must I live as rotting flesh--when for years I was so beautiful?

DVAPARA

Who are you?

FLORENCE

(With great dignity.)

I am Countess Elisabeth Bathory. Make me lovely again!

DVAPARA

Where are you?

FLORENCE

A wretched prison in Hungary.

DVAPARA

When?

FLORENCE

The year of our Lord sixteen hundred and eleven. I must bathe in beauty to wash away the years! Help me.

DVAPARA

How may we help you?

FLORENCE

Bring girls, young virgins.

OCTAVIA

Florence, this is most indecorous.

FLORENCE

They must be pure, to purify me. To wash away my sins.

OSCAR

Professor, I believe this is quite enough.

FLORENCE

Cleanse me with their blood.

BRAM

I say, sir, put a stop to this!

DVAPARA

Rousing her too quickly could harm her.

FLORENCE

Let me bathe in their blood. My skin needs their youth.

OCTAVIA

Mr. Wilde, I beg you!

OSCAR

Professor!

FLORENCE

A warm bath for my face, to soak away the lines of age.

DVAPARA

Countess--

FLORENCE

For my breasts, to make them round and soft--

BRAM

(Going to her.)

Florence, please wake up.

DVAPARA

Gently, Mr. Stoker.

FLORENCE

(Touching him, lustfully.)

Are you a virgin? Ah, I can see you are!

OCTAVIA

My dear!

OSCAR

Bram, let me--

FLORENCE

Give me your life.

BRAM

Florence, you are not yourself.

DVAPARA

I warn you, Mr. Stoker.

FLORENCE

Give me your blood.

Suddenly a horrible scream erupts from the doorway as TY steps in and sees DVAPARA.

TY

The fiend! You've let it in! The nasty human spider!

FLORENCE is shocked out of her trance and clutches BRAM. ARTHUR wakes up and looks bewildered. DVAPARA turns up a gaslight and OSCAR tries to restrain TY.

OSCAR

Ty, for the love of God!

TY

Kill it, Mr. Wilde, before it catches us all! He's looking at me all hungry-like!

(Clutches OSCAR.)

Can't you see what he wants?!

BRAM

Don't listen, Florence!

OSCAR

Outside, Ty, please!

TY

(As OSCAR drags him out into the hall.)

Don't let him snare you in his web!

OSCAR

(Offstage.)

Come along!

ARTHUR

(After a bit of silence.)

Stoker, what have I missed?

OCTAVIA

Merely the unfortunate consequences of allowing stable help into the drawing room. My

apologies, Professor, in Mr. Wilde's stead.  
Tell me, are you really of royal blood?

DVAPARA

It fills my veins, dear lady.  
(He kisses her hand. She is pleased.)  
I regret I must leave you now.

BRAM

Not without an apology to Miss Balcombe.

FLORENCE

Bram, whatever for?

DVAPARA

Miss Balcombe's past was only unlocked by mesmerism. I cannot bear responsibility for what is found there. Nevertheless, young lady--  
(He kisses her hand. She is pleased.)  
I hope you will forgive me if I have inconvenienced you.

FLORENCE

Nonsense, sir. If I've said something dreadful, it's my own fault.

ARTHUR

What has she said? What the devil's gone on?!

OCTAVIA

If you'd only pay attention, Mr. Doyle, instead of gibbering in that infantile manner--

ARTHUR

Gibbering?

BRAM

Doyle, let's see Professor Dvapara to the door, shall we?

DVAPARA

I shall be indebted to you, sir. Ladies.

BRAM

Your ancestors were kings, you say?

FLORENCE

Good night, Professor.

BRAM

(As he, DVAPARA, and ARTHUR disappear down the hall.)  
Professor, I wonder, could you appraise this Buddha for me?

DVAPARA

I am not a Buddhist, sir.

OCTAVIA

(On her way to the door.)  
Florence, I shall ask that in future you avoid mesmerists like the plague and keep your beauty secrets to yourself.

(She leaves.)

FLORENCE goes immediately to one of the French doors and peers out, watching DVAPARA depart down the drive. BRAM comes in and goes to FLORENCE, joining her at the window.

BRAM

Have you read my missive?

FLORENCE

Mr. Stoker, your persistence is almost as charming as your methods are childish. That is not why I asked Oscar to invite you here. I care only for him.

BRAM

But you stare into the night after Eastern mystics?

FLORENCE

Professor Dvapara has panache. That marvelous cape.

BRAM

I'll get one!

(Taking her hand.)

You're becoming as stodgy as your ancient aunt.

FLORENCE

Mr. Stoker--

Behind them, MISS QUIMBY creeps into the room.

BRAM

Wilde? He's not good-looking.

FLORENCE

please. You are Oscar's friend and he trusts you. I must trust  
 you introduced me to so few of his other acquaintances--

M

FLORENCE

ce, but his behavior since before we left London has been most  
 enthusiasm for wild entertainments alternating with crashing

of white powder from her sleeve.)

And I found this in his room.

MISS QUIMBY

There's a stalwart gentleman, stealing another's lady!

BRAM

Damn these country homes! There's no privacy. Good night, Florence. We shall speak  
 later.

He leaves hurriedly.

MISS QUIMBY

(Calling after him.)

What do I get to keep me mouth shut?

FLORENCE

(Hiding bottle.)

Miss Quimby, he's harmless.

MISS QUIMBY

Right. And a fine little countess you are! Too precious to touch a worm, but oh, what  
 you'd like to do!

FLORENCE

What did I say? Did you hear? No one would tell me.

MISS QUIMBY

Couldn't help but hear you all throughout the house. Shrieking about taking a bath in  
 blood.

ARTHUR comes in quietly.

FLORENCE

In front of all those people--

MISS QUIMBY

Worse than that, dearie, you wanted virgin's blood!

FLORENCE

Well, at least you're safe.

MISS QUIMBY

Ooo! Here! Got your tongue loosened up now, I'll wager!

ARTHUR

Miss Quimby, please. Miss Balcombe's had an unusual experience, and from what I understand, so have I.

MISS QUIMBY

Ain't we all?

FLORENCE

Forgive me, Miss Quimby. I am feeling a bit queer, as you might imagine.

(She goes to the door.)

Good night, Mr. Doyle.

(She leaves.)

ARTHUR

Good night.

MISS QUIMBY

Cold-blooded as a worm, that one. But some gentlemen like icy ladies, don't they, Mr. Doyle?

ARTHUR

(Embarrassed.)

If you don't mind--

MISS QUIMBY

I never mind.

(He can only stare.)

What kind of woman do you enjoy, sir? If I may inquire?

ARTHUR

Miss, I...uh...

MISS QUIMBY



Oh, dear me! What a forward girl I am! Let's change subjects, shall we? How old are you, lad?

ARTHUR

Almost twenty.

MISS QUIMBY

(Stroking the linga.)

Compelling little oddity, ain't it? Demands stroking.

(Puts his hand on the linga.)

So smooth. Twenty's a pretty age. Cool to the touch, ain't it?

ARTHUR

It's been worn away by centuries of adoration.

MISS QUIMBY

Man of science, are you?

ARTHUR

I...uh...attend medical college at Edinburgh.

MISS QUIMBY

(Moving closer.)

Doctor Doyle, then, is it?

ARTHUR

Not yet.

MISS QUIMBY

Have you had much experience with anatomy?

ARTHUR

Oh, yes, I've dissected several cadavers in various states of decay--

MISS QUIMBY

Oh, no, I'm talking about live anatomicals. Frinstance, I've a terrible swelling right here--

(She places his hand on her bosom.)

--Could you get me some relief for it, Doctor?

(He tries to take his hand away, but she replaces it.)

I'd like a thorough examination, if you don't mind. Praps I should pay a visit to your office later this evening?

ARTHUR

(Clears his throat.)

I'm afraid I'm sharing quarters with Mr. Stoker.

MISS QUIMBY

Of course, of course. Mustn't disturb that two-faced bag of wind. I'm in with the cook unfortunately, but there's always the stable. It's warm, the hay smells sweet, and if I drop a copper to Ty and the other stableboy I'm quite sure they'd oblige us and disappear.

ARTHUR

Miss, I must confess you're very...I mean I'm rather...or actually very inclined, however...

MISS QUIMBY

What a sweetie! So shy! For you, it's only three shillings.

ARTHUR

Three shillings!

MISS QUIMBY

Usually it's a crown.

(Takes a dainty brandy bottle from her bodice.)

Care for a tipple?

ARTHUR

Consider yourself lucky I do not inform Mr. Wilde of your activities. I'm quite certain he would not be pleased--

MISS QUIMBY

He knows. And says not a word. Me regular wages are next to bloody nothing--

ARTHUR

Why, you're inebriated.

MISS QUIMBY

He says not a word and I say not a word. An even exchange.

ARTHUR

Surely you're not accusing your employer--

MISS QUIMBY

He's a nice boy. Very upright and decent. Awfully religious of late, but not a man who ought to get married.

ARTHUR

(Trying to leave.)

Good night, Miss Quimby.

She produces a syringe.

MISS QUIMBY

Dr. Doyle, look what I found peeping out of your medical bag.

ARTHUR

(Trying to take it.)

I'm a doctor! Of course I have syringes--  
MISS QUIMBY touches her finger to the needle,  
then rubs it on her gums.

MISS QUIMBY

I might suppose. Every man's got his weakness.

(.)

one.

She leaps up and kisses him full on the mouth. He  
doesn't actually respond, but she has taken his  
breath away. After a moment, she pulls back.

MISS QUIMBY

ARTHUR

ARTHUR nods and fairly runs out of the room.  
MISS QUIMBY follows more slowly, smiling. TY  
precedes OSCAR into the room, carrying a bundle  
of blankets.

blooming mind out in the bleeding stable--  
MISS QUIMBY.)

MISS QUIMBY

here, lad.

ARTHUR

oy.

She goes. TY starts spreading blankets on the settee  
as OSCAR carefully shuts the doors behind them.

ARTHUR

My guests will say when they find a horseman lounging in the

drawing room?

TY

(Imitating aristocracy in a silly voice.)

Oh my heavens! A horseman lounging in the drawing room!

OSCAR

This is a respectable house.

TY

Respectable, is it?

OSCAR

For God's sake, my future aunt-in-law is visiting.

TY

Why'd you want me to meet you in the cemetery tonight?

OSCAR

(Pause; he is taken aback.)

To propitiate our Druidic ancestors for predictions of the future. A very beautiful churchyard, didn't you find? Nothing there but moonlight and death.

TY

Druids, my arse. I've heard tales about the goings-on in London cemeteries after dark. Does the same hold true in Ireland?

OSCAR

I can't imagine what you mean.

TY

Miss Quimby tells me you've got a great imagination. Imagine what happened to me behind that tombstone this evening!

OSCAR

I'd rather not.

TY

Aw, never mind. I'll keep shut about it if you let me stay here tonight.

OSCAR

Ty, I'd like to oblige you--

TY

(Taking off the scarf, with real fear.)  
 Care to see what actually occurred in the boneyard? Treat yourself to these nasty gashes.  
 Look at my neck!

(Hesitantly, OSCAR peers at TY'S neck.)  
 You saw the fellow what drug me into that cape of his. Moonlight and death!

OSCAR  
 Tick bites. From sleeping in the stable.

TY begins checking all the doors and windows the  
 make sure they are locked.

TY  
 Biggest tick I ever seen. And you, like a fool, inviting the bloody monster into your  
 house!

OSCAR  
 Pure xenophobia on your part. Professor Dvapara is a cultured gentleman, albeit of  
 foreign extraction.

TY  
 He sucked me blood, Mr. Wilde. Tried to drain me dry, he did! I almost got murdered to  
 death out there and you run off--saving what? Your reputation? Bloody hell.

OSCAR  
 Very well. Stay here. But out to the stable in the morning before my guests wake up.

TY  
 (Taking OSCAR'S hand.)  
 Bless you, Mr. Wilde. You're a damn fine fellow for a gentleman.

OSCAR  
 (Turning off the gaslight.)  
 Good night, Ty. Sleep the sleep of angels.

In the darkness, TY gasps.

OSCAR  
 Ty, what's the matter?

TY  
 (Laughing with embarrassment.)  
 I...ain't been scared of the dark since I was a kiddie.



OSCAR lights the candle that was used during the mesmerism.

OSCAR

Then, let there be light. And God saw the light that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night  
(OSCAR tenderly smooths TY's hair.)

TY

G'night, Mr. Wilde.

OSCAR

Remember, fear is a completely useless emotion.

TY

Still, it don't hurt to be careful.

OSCAR smiles and leaves. TY snuggles down into the blankets and tries to go to sleep, but his eyes refuse to close. Finally, after much tossing and turning, he sings to himself in a sweet, childish voice, "Brother James' Air."

TY

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want  
He makes me down to lie  
In pastures green he leadeth me  
The silent waters by  
He leadeth me, He leadeth me  
The silent waters by

While TY is preoccupied with his singing, a mysterious fog seeps in from under the draperies of one of the French doors.

TY

(Sitting up slowly, as if hypnotized.)  
Yea, though I walk through shadowed vale  
I will fear no ill  
For Thou art with me  
And Thy rod and staff me comfort still  
Thy rod and staff me comfort still...

The fog ceases and DVAPARA steps out of the draperies, caped and visible only in dim silhouette.

TY stares at him, mesmerized. Slowly he stands and goes to DVAPARA, touching the cape in childish awe. In one swift, smooth movement, DVAPARA wraps TY in the cape as a mother would a child, or a spider would a fly. DVAPARA puts out the candle and in the darkness TY gives an erotic cry of despair. Silence for a few moments, then OSCAR creeps into the room with a single lit candle.

AR  
: you quite all right?

He prowls about, searching the room until he comes to the draperies from which DVAPARA recently issued forth. He throws them open and gasps when he discovers ARTHUR hiding there.

AR

HUR  
the stable, and was on my way to investigate.

M  
(idle.)  
cry? It sounded like a soul in torment.

HUR  
(the lights.)  
groom--I recognized the vocal modulations.

M

AR  
ere because he was still frightened.

M  
ined your offer.

ARTHUR

Or perhaps his fears were realized. Did he enlighten you regarding his terror of Professor Dvapara?



OSCAR

(Still searching the room.)

Well, it seems...oh, never mind. It's late and I may have been slightly mesmerized myself.

BRAM

(Starting to search as well.)

Oh, out with it, Wilde. What chilled him so?

OSCAR

I retreated here for quiet inspiration and instead--

(Laughing with embarrassment.)

Have either of you read Varney the Vampire?

Outside, a dog howls in the distance.

ARTHUR

Oh, rubbish.

BRAM

No, but I've read that vampire story by Polidori.

ARTHUR

I suppose the lad had gaping wounds in his throat and hallucinated bats and wolves?

OSCAR

I don't know if "gape" is quite the proper term, but there were punctures.

BRAM

(Also searching.)

But this is incredible!

The search for TY continues; they throw open drapes, cupboards, etc.

ARTHUR

Pure superstition, gentlemen. Concocted by the Roman Catholic Church to keep everyone wearing crucifixes. Reanimated corpses are easily explained.

BRAM

How is that, Doyle?

ARTHUR

Elementary, my dear Stoker. Epileptic seizures often result in premature burial--such

unfortunates are frequently discovered in tortured positions when they are exhumed, having bloodied their lips and fingers tearing at the walls of their wooden prisons.

OSCAR

Oh, how horrid. I'm not sure I wouldn't prefer to believe in vampirism.

ARTHUR

Or soil conditions can preserve a body so that when a stake is driven into the heart of a suspiciously healthy-looking corpse, fresh blood and fluids burst forth.

ARTHUR throws open a cabinet, finds nothing.  
Again, the dog howls.

ARTHUR

But, of course, if one can believe in transubstantiation of bread into flesh and wine into blood, every variety of illogic becomes possible.

OSCAR

And what of Christ himself rising from the dead?

BRAM

But not to suck blood from the living.

ARTHUR

In a manner of speaking. But we twiddle rosaries with our thumbs and pray to him, rather than warding him off with wild roses and necklaces of garlic like a proper vampire.

More dogs begin to howl.

OSCAR

Unrepentent atheist?

ARTHUR

I believe there is an intelligent force in Nature--though to call this force a Gallilean seems to me a bit presumptuous. I put my faith in reason, not passion.

OSCAR

Apollo, rather than Dionysis. I worship both.

ARTHUR

And I doubt there is such a thing as a soul that survives death. I've seen little evidence of it in my examinations of corpses and even less in my interactions with the living.

OSCAR

(Giving up the search.)

But how do you explain, my dear Arthur, Ty's absolute disappearance from this room?

BRAM

Why, that's simple logic. He went outside.

ARTHUR

When he was terrified to do so?

There is a weak knocking sound at one of the French doors. It grows steadily louder. The dogs stop howling.

OSCAR

Perhaps something more horrific was inside.

They look about them nervously.

BRAM

What's that knocking?

They listen as the knocking grows louder, then stare at the curtained French door. None of them move toward it for a moment. Finally OSCAR goes resolutely to the drapes and throws them open.

OSCAR

Miss Quimby!

MISS QUIMBY stands outside the glass, knocking feebly. She looks terrible--paler than death and her eyes wide open but glazed. ARTHUR signals frantically behind the other men's backs for her to keep silent.

OSCAR

(Letting her in.)

Entre! Entre! You gave us quite a start. Whatever are you doing outdoors in the chill?

(She staggers zombielike into the room.)

You'll catch your death! Have you seen Ty? He's disappeared.

ARTHUR

(As MISS QUIMBY staggers to the settee and falls upon it.)

It's quite apparent she's been drinking--and liable to be incoherent.

BRAM

Wilde, you've not much luck with servants, have you?

OSCAR

(Going to MISS QUIMBY on the settee.)  
Miss Quimby, shall I help you to your room?  
(He sits down next to her and she falls upon him.)  
Oh, dear. This is most indelicate.

ARTHUR

She's drunk herself insensible.

OSCAR

My dear, you're clammy. Arthur, your professional opinion--how may we wake her to trundle her off to bed?

ARTHUR

Must we wake her?

OSCAR

If we carry her down the hall Mrs. Balcombe would undoubtedly pop out of her bedroom and squawk about rendezvous and impropriety.

BRAM

Prick her with a pin. Here.  
(Pulls one out of his coat lining, hands it to ARTHUR.)  
This qualifies as surgery--your field, is it not?

OSCAR

(As ARTHUR reluctantly accepts the pin.)  
Do hurry, she's not exactly diaphanous.

ARTHUR pricks MISS QUIMBY in the forearm with the pin. She does not react. ARTHUR tries again. And again. He quickly jabs her several times with the pin.

AR  
ed you to prick her, not tattoo her.

Panicking, ARTHUR reaches up and pulls down MISS QUIMBY'S eyelid, then listens to her heart.

M  
is it?

OSCAR

Arthur, what's wrong? She's just a bit fermented, isn't she?

ARTHUR

(Leans back, horrified and saddened.)  
She's just a bit dead, I'm afraid.

BRAM

No!

OSCAR

How could she--?

ARTHUR

Worse yet, I pricked her several times and found not a single drop of blood.

They all stare at each other. OSCAR moves away from the body, and the head tilts, revealing two monstrous wounds on MISS QUIMBY'S neck. BRAM goes to the French door and locks it.

OSCAR

A dog--a large dog. I heard one howling earlier.

ARTHUR

(As he reluctantly examines the body.)  
Perhaps...no, the carotid artery is too neatly slashed.

BRAM

Suicide, then?

They both just look at him.

OSCAR

Do you suppose some diabolical device...using suction...?

MISS QUIMBY'S body slides off the settee onto the floor.

OSCAR

Oh, dear.

ARTHUR

(As they all start to pick her up, to BRAM.)

Take her arms.

BRAM

(Lifting.)

Gracious, Wilde, what do you feed your servants.

OSCAR

(Holding a leg, as BRAM takes another leg, and ARTHUR supports from behind.)

Where shall weB?

They all pull her separate directions, most indelicately.

ARTHUR

Back on the setteeB

OSCAR

Behind the setteeB

BRAM

Out of the drawing room, at leastB

They freeze when they hear a knock at the hall door. It swings open, revealing DVAPARA, sans cape.

DVAPARA

Mr. Wilde, your servants appear to be in the habit of leaving your front door standing open.

(Surveying the room.)

Pardon me--I came in search of my cape, but apparently this is an inopportune time.

(Starts to leave.)

ARTHUR

Professor, have you ever seen this young lady before?

DVAPARA

She admitted me to the premises earlier this evening.

ARTHUR

Do you notice any change in her appearance between then and now?

DVAPARA

(Studies MISS QUIMBY.)  
When I first made her acquaintance...she was alive.

BRAM  
(Aggressively.)  
Have you any information as to how she might have been deprived of that fortunate condition?

DVAPARA  
Murder, perhaps?

OSCAR  
(Tilting her head to show the wounds.)  
And what of these?

DVAPARA  
(Looking more closely.)  
Ah. I've not seen this for years.

ARTHUR  
What?

OSCAR  
It's familiar?

BRAM  
The bite of a vampire, perhaps?

The others look at him with pained embarrassment for revealing what they've all been thinking.

DVAPARA  
(Smiles charmingly.)  
Oh, no, gentlemen, these are modern times. Nothing so romantic as that. Although, from my visit to Wallachia I recall the peasants persist in that tragic belief. The violations of corpses they commit in order to rid themselves of nosferatu-

OSCAR  
(Eagerly.)  
Yes, how do they do it?

DVAPARA  
(Smiles patronizingly.)  
No, it is too loathesome to describe to gentlemen. This unfortunate creature has been the

victim of coagulum poisoning.

ARTHUR

What's that? I've never heard of it.

DVAPARA

It is derived from several noxious roots native to Slavonia. In its purest form, a few granules in a major artery produce massive clotting, literally curdling the blood. Such bodies do not bleed.

The other three are confounded.

DVAPARA

Rather than hunting mythical monsters, perhaps your time would be better spent searching for a more prosaic murderer. Who might have preferred this girl dead? Perhaps she knew some man's darkest secret.

ARTHUR, BRAM and OSCAR try to appear nonchalant. FLORENCE comes into the room through the hall doors.

FLORENCE

Gentlemen, will you please retire? I can't sleep at all with this--

(She sees the body; they try to hide it from her.)

Camilla! Is she quite well?

FLORENCE tries to go to MISS QUIMBY, but BRAM restrains her.

BRAM

No, Miss Balcombe, it's too horrible.

OSCAR

Please dearest, go back to bed.

FLORENCE

(Breaking free of BRAM.)

The poor thing--what's wrong with her?

(Stops when she views MISS QUIMBY more closely.)

She's dead, isn't she, Oscar?

OSCAR

Yes, I'm afraid so.

FLORENCE



(Stroking MISS QUIMBY'S forehead.)  
 You needn't try to hide her from me. Men are always so helpless about death. Women--  
 (She looks at DVAPARA, slightly distracted.)  
 --Understand it. Or we are, at any rate, more practical about it. Was she attacked? What did she die of?

ARTHUR  
 Perhaps some queer disease.

FLORENCE  
 (Frightened, looks at OSCAR.)  
 Is it contagious?

OSCAR  
 Please, Florence, go to bed. It's been a long night and we'll tell you about it in the morning.

BRAM  
 Miss Balcombe, Mr. Doyle and I will see you to your chambers.

FLORENCE  
 (A bit annoyed, she starts toward the door.)  
 As you wish. But don't keep me in the dark, Oscar. If there's something to be worried about, I'm quite proficient. Good night, Professor.

With looks of caution thrown over their shoulders,  
 ARTHUR and BRAM follow FLORENCE out.

DVAPARA  
 (Amused.)  
 Did you imagine a dead body would frighten a woman who once bathed in blood?

OSCAR  
 (Trying to place MISS QUIMBY in a restful position.)  
 I'm quite sure that was just a nasty thought you placed in her mind.

DVAPARA  
 I never manipulate thought. I only call out thoughts that already lurk within. What lurks within you, Mr. Wilde?

OSCAR  
 What thoughts did you call out of Ty?

DVAPARA

AR  
 s. The lad who shouted so when he saw you.

PARA  
 d to him.

AR  
 s neck?

PARA  
 ould easily be the marks of love.

AR  
 nges the subject.)  
 ampires, Professor? Are there incubi and succubi in India?

PARA  
 ve fantasy, is it not? Quite seductive--eternal life, eternal youth.  
 of hungers of the flesh. The wisdom of antiquity.

AR  
 Tempting indeed, sir, if one loves life and thirsts for knowledge.

DVAPARA  
 When I first saw you, I perceived it. I thirst as well.

OSCAR  
 To hear Homer recite, or Thespis declaim--

DVAPARA  
 To inspire Seneca's bloodbaths--

OSCAR  
 To set eyes on Dante's Beatrice--

DVAPARA  
 Or Shakespeare's Mr. W.H.

OSCAR looks uncomfortable.

DVAPARA

What would one give for such a life? One's soul?

OSCAR

Perhaps. But imagine the shock of Faust attempting to barter his soul and then discovering he never had one--as Arthur proposes.

DVAPARA

(Moving too close for comfort.)

Certainly you have a soul, Mr. Wilde. A soul of genius. I see it dancing there behind your eyes. There's more in you than most men.

OSCAR

That, sir, is mere curiosity, I'm afraid. Ty has disappeared and I believe you know what has happened to him.

DVAPARA

You would do well, Mr. Wilde, to refrain from insulting your guests and expend your energies in curbing the immoralities of your servants rather than encouraging them.

OSCAR

(Frightened and confused by the accusation.)

What do you mean?

DVAPARA

(Gesturing toward MISS QUIMBY.)

You see the result.

OSCAR

I resent your intimations, sir. They border on libel. You will understand if I ask you to leave at once.

(Opening the curtains over the French doors.)

I believe this is the most direct route.

TY is standing outside the window wearing DVAPARA'S cape. He is so small, compared to the Professor, that it trails upon the ground.

OSCAR

(After a momentary start.)

Ty!

(Opens the door.)

We've been searching everywhere!  
 (TY comes in.)  
 And you've stolen the Professor's cape.  
 (Sotto voce.)  
 Please give it back as he's been most tiresome.

TY  
 (Virtually ignoring OSCAR.)  
 I'd give it all back if I could.

OSCAR  
 Then please do so at once so we can all go to bed.

TY  
 (Laughing mirthlessly.)  
 I don't need no sleep. Never no more.

OSCAR  
 Yes, you do. Now remove that cape.

OSCAR tries to take the cape, but TY pushes him  
 away effortlessly, sending OSCAR reeling.

TY  
 Bugger off.  
 (To DVAPARA.)  
 You can slink on home, now. He's mine.

OSCAR  
 Ty--  
 (OSCAR starts toward the hall door.)

TY  
 Another step and I'll rip your throat out. Same goes for talking.  
 (OSCAR freezes. TY sees MISS QUIMBY.)  
 Kilt another whore, did you? Easy when they're out at night putting their trust in  
 strangers. Voracious bastard.  
 (Indicating OSCAR.)  
 I got a prior claim on this one.

DVAPARA  
 My claim is of centuries. You are weak as a newborn.

TY

Drained me dry, you did. You're obligated to let me fill my veins.

DVAPARA

I owe you nothing.

TY

You love me, in some filthy way. That's an obligation.

DVAPARA

I love you as my creation. Mine to create. Mine to destroy.

Outside, a cock crows.

TY

The centuries have worn you out. I'm fresh.

DVAPARA

You have no grave.

TY

Cause I never died. And never will.

DVAPARA

(Bows graciously.)

So you believe. Mr. Wilde, expect me.

DVAPARA disappears.

TY

Coward. Afraid of me--can you fathom that? A monster of his caliber--and I put him to flight!

(To OSCAR, who is edging toward the door.)

But you'll not fly, will you Mr. Wilde? Pin you like a butterfly to a card, I will.

OSCAR

(Edging away as TY stalks him.)

Ty, I've always been good to you.

TY

Very good, sir.

OSCAR

Been more than an employer, haven't I?

TY

Much more.

Gradually, rays of dawn stream into the room through the open French doors. The light is faint, barely perceptible at first, but grows in strength. Neither TY nor OSCAR notices it, as their dance of death is around the perimeter of the room and they never step into the pool of light.

TY

Careful not to cry out, now. Potentially embarrassing situation, isn't it? In a respectable household.

OSCAR

Please, Ty.

TY

Now I'm asking you to meet me in the cemetery. Ironical, ain't it?

OSCAR

Do you think it wise to steal the Professor's cape?

TY

Like to see him try and get it.

OSCAR

After all, you're just a boy.

TY

I ain't your boy no more. Your blood belongs to me. Like my blood belonged to him. Stole my life, he did. All the secrets in my blood. But gave me new life. New secrets. The secrets of the ages. Share them with me.

OSCAR

You're not a boy, you're a demon.

TY

And wise as a Druid! Wanna hear me prognosticate your future?

OSCAR

And what happens to demons, Ty? They live in torment.

TY

They take pleasure in torment. Let me torment you, Mr. Wilde. You'll love it.

They stalk each other in silence for a moment, then suddenly OSCAR makes a break for the French door. TY almost grabs him as he passes by. OSCAR disappears out the door and TY starts to follow, but then halts when he steps into the pool of sunlight--as if an invisible hand restrains him.

TY

(Puzzled.)

What the hell?

(Looks at his hands in the sun. He gasps, realizing.)

I got no grave. Nowhere to go. Mr. Wilde!

(He staggers about the room.)

Mr. Wilde, bury me! You owe me that!

(OSCAR appears in the doorway, hesitant and horrified.)

I'm on fire! Bury me! The earth is cool.

(Covers himself with the cape.)

Take me to the graveyard, Mr. Wilde! Don't let me burn.

(Falls to the floor, completely covered with the cape.)

Bury me!

Smoke begins to pour out from under the cape.

TY'S screams become inhuman, tortured. OSCAR can hardly bear to watch, but cannot take his eyes away. The smoke billows wildly as TY'S screams die away. In the silence, the smoke begins to clear.

After a moment, OSCAR goes to the cape and picks it up. There is nothing under it but dust. OSCAR crosses himself and kneels over the cape to pray.

END OF ACT I

ACT II



The next night. The room is virtually unchanged. The only additions are a simple closed casket on trestles and candles and flowers throughout the room. One of the French doors stands open. The room is empty, but after a moment FLORENCE comes in, followed by BRAM and ARTHUR. As they speak, FLORENCE closes the French door and draws the draperies.

FLORENCE

Do you think, Mr. Stoker, that you could persuade him to go to bed?

ARTHUR

He hasn't slept in 36 hours.

BRAM

(Alternately gnawing a chicken leg and sipping milk.)

Perhaps, now that the viewing's over and we've all paid our respects--

FLORENCE

(Trying to take BRAM'S hands, but they are full of food.)

I'm very frightened. He's worse every moment.

(Takes out the bottle of white powder.)

Mr. Doyle--

BRAM

Florence, don't--

FLORENCE

(Showing ARTHUR the bottle.)

I found this in Oscar's things.

ARTHUR

(Taking it with a professional air.)

Let me examine it.

(Eagerly sniffs contents, is surprised.)

Dispose of this at once.

FLORENCE

What is it?

BRAM

Coagulum?

ARTHUR

No, potassium cyanide. Deadly, but the symptoms are nothing like Miss Quimby's.

FLORENCE

What a horrible death.

BRAM

I should have discharged a servant like that at the first sign of ill behavior.

ARTHUR

(Annoyed.)

Oh, yes, Stoker--serves her right.

BRAM

Pardon me, Doyle, I didn't mean--

(Belches quietly.)

Excuse me. This stringy chicken's made me a bit queasy.

FLORENCE

(Gesturing toward the casket.)

Mr. Stoker, some respect, please.

BRAM drops the chicken leg in a wastebasket and sets the half-full glass of milk on the bookcase.

ARTHUR

(Looking at the powder.)

This is more frequently an instrument of suicide than an agent of murder.

OSCAR bursts in through the hall doors, manically cheerful and laden with a satchel and wreaths of wild roses and garlic. FLORENCE snatches the bottle from ARTHUR and hides it.

OSCAR

(Hanging wreaths on all the doors and windows.)

There's roses, that's for remembrance.

(To FLORENCE.)

Pray you, love, remember. And there is garlic, that's for thoughts.

FLORENCE

Paraphrase!

OSCAR

(Places a wreath around FLORENCE'S neck.)

There's rue for you, and here's some for me;  
(Places one around his own neck.)  
We may call it herb of grace a' Sundays. You may wear your rue with a difference.

BRAM

Rather ungainly for Ophelia, wouldn't you say, Wilde?

OSCAR

But mad enough, wouldn't you say, Arthur?

ARTHUR

Oscar, this is the nineteenth century!

OSCAR

Yes, and I hope to live to the twentieth.

FLORENCE

If we don't all suffocate in this room first. What are you doing?

OSCAR

Protecting us. I'm quite serious--I hope you all realize.

FLORENCE

Protecting us? Oh, yes. Fresh Irish air is quite deadly this time of year.  
(Goes to open the French door.)

OSCAR

(Stopping her.)  
Leave it closed!

BRAM

Wilde, there's no need to be ungracious.

ARTHUR

If vampires did exist, I'm quite certain they wouldn't be deterred by fragrances.

FLORENCE

Vampires! Oh, Oscar. You're overtired and your imagination's gotten the better of you.  
Stop talking and go to bed.

OSCAR

It is so exhausting not to talk. Indulge me, please.

FLORENCE

I always indulge you--that's the problem.

ARTHUR

Oscar, I've deduced the solution to the murder and it has nothing to do with vampires.

OSCAR

Coagulum, I suppose?

ARTHUR

Ty himself killed Miss Quimby, then ran away.

OSCAR

Why?

ARTHUR

(Uncomfortably.)

Perhaps some...romantic indiscretion or intrigue.

OSCAR

I have my doubts.

ARTHUR

More plausible still when we remember that Ty tried so desperately to make us think ill of Professor Dvapara.

OSCAR

More plausible still when we recall that Ty was a Slavonian herbalist in a former life and therefore had an intimate knowledge of exotic poisons. Is there such a thing as coagulum, Doctor Doyle?

ARTHUR

I'll admit I've never run across it, but the world holds many secrets even Scottish medical schools are not privy to.

OSCAR

Including vampires. I may not be a man of science, but I did observe with my own eyes--I'm trying to be empirical about this--I saw Ty die because of Dvapara.

BRAM

How?

OSCAR

He was burned to death by the morning sun.

ARTHUR

This is the difficulty of substituting passion for reason.

FLORENCE

How could Professor Dvapara be responsible for that--even if it were true?

OSCAR

Dvapara had vampirized him, turned him into nosferatu--the living dead.

ARTHUR

But what evidence do you have?

OSCAR

(Producing DVAPARA'S cape.)

This.

(They just stare.)

BRAM

That's a cape.

OSCAR

Dvapara's cape. Ty was wearing it when he disintegrated.

(Shakes it. Dust flies.)

That's all that's left of poor Ty.

FLORENCE

Oscar, this is no longer amusing.

ARTHUR

Out of respect for poor Miss Quimby--

FLORENCE

I propose we summon Professor Dvapara and let him vindicate himself.

(Teasing.)

Such a handsome gentleman--for a vampire.

OSCAR

Interesting-looking!

BRAM

And return his cape. It's rather fashionable, isn't it, for an import?

ARTHUR

I tried to reach him all afternoon myself, to find out how he made me babble like a fool.

OSCAR

And did you see him?

ARTHUR

Pounded several times on the door of the old rectory to no effect.

OSCAR

See! See!

(He takes out several crucifixes on chains.)

Put these on.

ARTHUR

These relics are childish.

OSCAR

I've toyed with Catholicism for years. Luckily I've saved my playthings.

FLORENCE

(As OSCAR hands her a crucifix.)

Oh, Oscar, do you really think he'll return?

OSCAR

He'll come for the cape. He knows it's here.

BRAM

(Sniffing the cape.)

He may not want it after all. It stinks like the grave.

They all look at each other and put the crucifixes  
on, except ARTHUR.

ARTHUR

This is absurd. Gods and devils! Besides, he's Oriental--how could Occidental religious symbols harm him?

OSCAR

Christianity is universal salvation!

ARTHUR

(Indicating the linga.)

A stout blow to the skull with this would be more practical.

BRAM

Perhaps he's just the carrier of some tropical plague. Shouldn't we alert someone before it spreads?

OSCAR

We must all stay together in this room. He only attacks those who are alone.

FLORENCE

I'm not about to spend the wee hours of the morning sitting up with a body in a casket.

OSCAR

(Suddenly quite anxious.)

Has one of you been in this room at all times since sunset?

ARTHUR

I believe so.

BRAM

I can't recall leaving.

FLORENCE

Oscar, this is quite enough. I'm going to bed.

OSCAR

Very well. But please leave up the garlands in your bedroom.

FLORENCE

Oh, dear. I'm safe from vampires but will choke to death on the odor of garlic and--  
(She sniffs.)

The others look puzzled and sniff as well. They turn toward the casket.

OSCAR

No, not already.

They resume sniffing and follow their noses to BRAM.

BRAM

(Reaching into his pocket.)

Oh, dear, it's the worms.

OSCAR

(Taking them.)

Congratulations all round. We've outlived the worm.

FLORENCE

I feel ill.

AR  
 s in a wastebasket.)  
 e escort Florence to her room?

HUR

AR  
 ENCE.)

RENCE  
 of spoilt invertebrates.

AR  
 tchel.)  
 ; wakeful.

M  
 s. Wilde, you've lost whatever sense you had.

AR  
 nife.)

They leave him alone. When they are gone, he hangs a garlic wreath on the decorative horizontal door handles of the hall doors. He sits down, takes a stake of mountain ash from the satchel and begins whittling it. So intent is he on his whittling that he does not notice the door handle begin to jiggle. Finally it jiggles so violently the garlic wreath falls off. The handles rattle loudly enough for OSCAR to hear, and he jumps up, crucifix at the ready. OCTAVIA comes in carrying her thick book, looking rather bleary, as if she has just risen from sleep. OSCAR screams.

AR

AVIA



OSCAR

Oh, Mrs. Balcombe! You startled me.

OCTAVIA

A most disrespectful salutation.

OSCAR

(Returns to his whittling.)

My apologies...I haven't slept.

OCTAVIA

Yes, you look it. The events of the day have also rendered me quite insomniac.

Therefore--

(Takes out a pad and pencil.)

I would like to take this opportunity to put a few questions to you, Mr. Wilde, regarding your engagement to my niece. Florence teases you about plagiarism, but what precisely is an aesthete, or rather, more simply: what do you do?

OSCAR

My dear lady, pray don't degrade me into the position of giving you useful information. We are born in an age when only the dull are treated seriously, and I live in terror of not being misunderstood.

OCTAVIA

Ah. You are an art critic. Pity. But you are young and may outgrow it. What are your religious beliefs?

OSCAR

I must admit, Mrs. Balcombe, that my religious convictions have recently been severely shaken. I was raised in a Christian family and I hope to find one. But of late I've been forced to ponder the immensities.

OCTAVIA

Most unfortunate, Mr. Wilde. To ponder is to wander.

OSCAR

In this case it's led to whittling.

OCTAVIA

Safe enough. As long as the item you whittle is properly useless.

OSCAR

It possesses a very definite purpose, Mrs. Balcombe. I plan to thrust it into the heart of Professor Dvapara.

OCTAVIA

(Making a note.)

Sense of humor. I was afraid of that.

OSCAR

I'm quite serious, Mrs. Balcombe. Professor Dvapara is a vampire and no doubt intends to murder us all.

(Offers a crucifix.)

Would you like a crucifix?

OCTAVIA

And a Papist proselytizer! Mr. Wilde, this is most disappointing. Not only do you slander a perfectly respectable gentleman (albeit of foreign extraction), but openly plot to murder him in a most vulgar manner.

OSCAR

It is to save our lives, Mrs. Balcombe, yours included.

OCTAVIA

(Putting away her notebook and rising.)

I regard it as an affront, sir, that you consider saving my life without my express permission. As for your vampire theory, it has merely confirmed my suspicions of your unsound mind. Retract it, sir, within twenty-four hours, or acting on behalf of Florence's mother, I shall withdraw her permission for you to marry her daughter. Good night, Mr. Wilde!

She starts to leave through the hall doors when BRAM and ARTHUR come in, hiding their crucifixes.

M  
e.

HUR

ong as you insult him with these fetishes.

AR

. the roses and garlic are up.

M

takes down the garlands and hide them.)

far from gentlemanly and borders on the uncivil.

HUR

es to pay his respects to Miss Quimby, as is proper. Please

remove your crucifix.

OSCAR  
Suicide!

BRAM  
And that knife.

OSCAR  
No!

BRAM  
Oscar, this is pure melodrama.

ARTHUR  
At least hide it. You're insulting Miss Quimby's memory.

OCTAVIA  
You'll never be admitted to the proper social circles at this rate.

OSCAR  
(Takes off the crucifix and puts it in his pocket.)  
Very well.  
(When they are not looking he hides the knife nearby.)

ARTHUR  
Thank you, Oscar. Now you're being reasonable.

BRAM  
(Going to the door.)  
Professor--he's relented.

DVAPARA  
(Entering the room, somewhat cautiously.)  
Good evening, Mr. Wilde.

OSCAR  
(Grudgingly.)  
Professor.

DVAPARA  
(Lays his hand on the casket.)  
Such a tragedy. So young.

OSCAR  
Such tempting flesh.

BRAM

Oscar!

DVAPARA

Has the young villain been found?

OSCAR

(Barely containing himself.)

He'll never be found.

DVAPARA

I have reason to believe he stole my cape, as well. I do hope that at least can be recovered.

OSCAR

You value human life less than a cape?

(Grabbing the knife and rushing DVAPARA.)

Monster!

BRAM

(As he and ARTHUR restrain OSCAR.)

Wilde, you're mad!

OSCAR

How fashionable is a cape on a headless body?!

ARTHUR

(Taking the knife from OSCAR.)

You're just griefstricken.

OCTAVIA

Professor, we are as apalled as you are. Mr. Wilde, let us hope you have recovered your wits by morning.

(She leaves.)

DVAPARA

(Calmly.)

Good night, madame.

OSCAR

But, he's...he could...oh, dash it all.

BRAM

(To DVAPARA.)

He's actually quite a gentleman.

DVAPARA

The past few days have been a strain for us all.

OSCAR

My apologies, Professor. I've just lost a houseful of servants--you understand my distress.

DVAPARA

Quite well.

OSCAR

(Producing the cape.)

Here, sir. With my apologies.

DVAPARA

Excellent. All is forgiven.

OSCAR

I found it this morning--among Ty's...things.

DVAPARA

(Taking the cape.)

You are indeed a gentleman, sir.

Suddenly DVAPARA makes a horrible, violent sound, and jerks back from the cape, holding his hand in pain.

BRAM

Wilde, what have you done!

DVAPARA

Fool!

ARTHUR

Oscar, what is it?

OSCAR

(Revealing the crucifix he had hidden under the cape.)

The image of Our Lord! It burns his hideous dead flesh!

ARTHUR

(Looks at the crucifix, now slightly bent.)  
Why, it's melted out of shape!

DVAPARA

(Venomous.)  
You think good all-powerful? When good and evil battle--both suffer. Until evil triumphs!

BRAM

My god!

OSCAR

You see! He is evil itself!

DVAPARA

Because you wish it, Mr. Wilde.

ARTHUR

But there can't be Indian vampires! The Hindoos cremate their dead!

DVAPARA

I was ancient, Mr. Doyle, before the first Hindoo was born. But I shall incinerate you all--just as I burned that trinket!

(Sweeping up the cape into his arms.)

Beware the night--gentlemen!

(He disappears into the darkness.)

For a moment they are all stunned.

ARTHUR

It was a trick, Oscar. Very clever, but sleight of hand. Any fakir could accomplish it with practice. Bram, you're not taken in as well?

BRAM silently retrieves the garlands of garlic and roses, replacing them on all the doors and windows.

OSCAR gathers his weapons: the stake, hammer, and knife.

BRAM

How long until daylight?

OSCAR

Hours yet.

BRAM

Shouldn't we keep watch? Or something?

OSCAR

(Beginning to reel.)

Oh, yes. Most definitely. You see, Arthur--the evil proves the good. God can burn the worm--

(Starts to fall. BRAM catches him.)

BRAM

Wilde, are you ill?

OSCAR

Relieved, I think. Now that I'm not alone in my madness. Thank you, Bram.

ARTHUR

Can you sleep?

OSCAR

I imagine I shall have to.

ARTHUR

Then I'll take the first watch in here.

BRAM

(Taking the hammer and ash stake from OSCAR.)

I'll look after the ladies.

ARTHUR

Good. Where is your crucifix?

BRAM

(Putting it around his neck.)

Here it is.

OSCAR

Ah! You've come round.

ARTHUR

Scientific curiosity.

BRAM

Oscar, may I see you to your room?

OSCAR

I'd be most grateful.

(To ARTHUR.)

Passion over reason, my friend.

BRAM

(Supporting OSCAR, as they leave.)

Sorry, old chap, to have been so skeptical. But these are modern times...

(Over his shoulder.)

Call me, Doyle, if you should require assistance.

ARTHUR

Certainly.

As soon as they are gone, ARTHUR replaces the garland on the hall doors. He gets out his medical bag and gives himself an injection. Rejuvenated, he turns down the gas lamps, lights the candle, then glances nervously at the casket. The dim outline of DVAPARA appears outside one of the French doors haloed in moonlight. ARTHUR does not see it. He reaches into his pocket for the crucifix, but pulls out only the chain--the cross itself is nowhere to be found. He goes warily to the coffin. He is about to open it, but stops himself and takes the garlic wreath from the French door (but does not see DVAPARA) and places it carefully on the casket. He backs fearfully away from the coffin and pauses before the French door without a wreath. Steeling himself, he goes to the casket and does not notice the handle of the unprotected door begin to move. He lifts the garlic wreath on the casket and is about to open the lid when he notices the door handle moving. He leaps to the doors and replaces the garlic wreath. DVAPARA'S silhouette disappears. Keeping an eye on the silhouette, ARTHUR goes back to the casket and prepares to throw open the lid. He realizes he has neither crucifix nor wreath, and thinking that DVAPARA is still outside one set of French doors, he removes the wreath from the other and holds it before himself as he flips open the casket. He backs away, throwing the wreath into the open coffin, but the coffin is empty. Resting against a wardrobe, ARTHUR



sighs in relief. Suddenly MISS QUIMBY bursts out of the wardrobe with a shriek.

ARTHUR

Good God!

MISS QUIMBY looks like a beautiful monster. Her white burial gown is stained with blood, as are her lips.

MISS QUIMBY

Been waiting for you all night, I have! Dvapara said you were mine.

ARTHUR

Miss Quimby, I--

MISS QUIMBY

(Advancing on him seductively.)

Left me out in the cold last night, did you? She's not fit for the rubbish pile.

ARTHUR

(Searching about desperately for some defense.)

I assure you--

MISS QUIMBY

You'll see. Tonight you'll get to know me in most intimate detail. Course, I ain't as warm as I woulda been last night.

ARTHUR

(Seeing the garlic wreath in the casket.)

You're not well. You're bleeding. I'm a doctor--let me help you.

MISS QUIMBY

(Laughs.)

I ain't unwell--I'm dead. And I can't precisely call this blood me own, neither. I'll never bleed again. Nor will I suckle babes, but they suckle me. Poor little darlings!

(He starts to move toward the casket; she intercepts.)

Now, now, sir. That's my casket and you're not to molest it. But there is a way you can help me. I'm cold. Give me your warmth, Mr. Doyle. Be tender with me. Hold me as you wanted to last night.

(As if hypnotized, ARTHUR touches her.)

Very nice, Mr. Doyle. You'll find it's pleasant being nice to me. I won't charge you nothing this time. All's I ever needed was one good man to turn me round--

Just as MISS QUIMBY is about to lunge for his throat, ARTHUR begins reciting the Latin Mass.

ARTHUR

Kyrie eleison, Christi elison, Kyrie eleison--

MISS QUIMBY

(Shrieking, covering her ears.)

Shut it! Please, cut it off! I beg you, Mr. Doyle!

ARTHUR

(Rapidly.)

Libera me, Domine, de morte aeterna, in die illa tremenda--

OSCAR and BRAM burst in through the hall doors;  
BRAM carries the hammer and the ash stake,  
OSCAR his cross and the big knife.

BRAM

(Dropping the hammer and stake in terror.)

Good heavens! She's alive.

OSCAR

(Brandishing the crucifix.)

No, she's not.

MISS QUIMBY reels away from him, hissing.

MISS QUIMBY

Keep that filthy thing away from me!

MISS QUIMBY eyes the door behind BRAM,  
making him very nervous. He  
looks for a weapon in his pockets.

ARTHUR

(Continuing under.)

Quando caeli movendi sunt et terra: Dum veneris judicare saeculum per ignem. Tremens factus sum eto, et timeo, dum discussio neverit, atque ventura ira.

MISS QUIMBY

Mr. Stoker, be a love. Let me warm myself.

She heads toward him with outstretched arms but he grabs his Buddha and wards her off with it. She screams.

BRAM

Nom myoho rengo kyo! Nom myoho rengo kyo!

MISS QUIMBY makes hesitant moves toward each of the exits, but finds her way blocked in each case by religion.

MISS QUIMBY

Have mercy!

OSCAR

(Reciting, overlapping the others.)

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul. He leadeth me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

BRAM

Nom myoho rengo kyo. Nom myoho rengo kyo.

MISS QUIMBY

Behave like gentlemen, sirs! I'm just a poor girl!

ARTHUR

Quando caeli movendi sunt et terra. Dies illa, dies irae, calamitatis et miseriae; dies magna et amara valde. Dum veneris judicare saeculum per ignum. Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine: et lux perpetua luceat eis. Libera me Domine de morte aeterna in die illa tremenda: quando caeli movendi sunt et terra; Dum veneris judicare saeculum per ignem.

MISS QUIMBY begins making terrified animal noises as they all converge upon her, the ecclesiastical words resounding through the room. She huddles to the floor and eventually takes refuge in her coffin, pulling the lid shut upon herself with a terrible sound. As soon as she is inside, all three men stop speaking and look at each other.

BRAM

(Almost smugly.)

The Buddha worked.

OSCAR

Perhaps any symbol of religion--

ARTHUR silently picks up the hammer and stake from the floor.

OSCAR

Arthur, are you certain?

BRAM

Doyle, perhaps I should--

ARTHUR

(Firmly.)

No. I'll do it. Stoker, be a good fellow and open the casket.

BRAM

(Tries, can't budge it.)

She's gripping it from within.

OSCAR

(Assisting.)

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name--

With a moan from MISS QUIMBY, the lid comes off. She sits up, but ARTHUR instantly presses the point of the stake to MISS QUIMBY'S heart, which silences her moan. She sinks back until she cannot be seen inside the casket. ARTHUR raises the hammer.

MISS QUIMBY

(Unseen, within the box.)

Oh, please, sir. Let me live--if you love me.

OSCAR

Don't listen, Arthur!

MISS QUIMBY

(Her hands grip the stake.)

I know you love me, Mr. Doyle. From when you first set eyes on me.

OSCAR

She's lying!

ARTHUR

I can't do it while she's saying these things.

MISS QUIMBY

Because I love you, Arthur. Truly I do. You know I do.

OSCAR

Not a word! Not another word!

Desperate, OSCAR takes the knife and hacks at MISS QUIMBY'S neck, unseen in the casket. Her words of love drown in a gurgle of blood as her hands flail and grip the sides of the casket.

OSCAR

Silence!

(Hacking again; the first blow did not complete the job.)

She doesn't love you, Arthur! She loved them all and not a one!

(Grunting as he hacks again, holding her head still with his hand.)

You pitiful, miserable soul!

Blood spurts out of the casket onto OSCAR, but he completes the beheading, lifting the severed head slightly out of the casket in the process, then replacing it.

OSCAR

Now, Arthur--finish it!

BRAM

For heaven's sake, Wilde, you've already decapitated her.

ARTHUR

Yes, have some pity, Oscar.

The disembodied head emits a hiss.

BRAM

Oh, my Lord.

MISS QUIMBY'S HEAD

(Weakly.)  
Kiss me, Arthur.

BRAM steadies the stake as ARTHUR pounds it in with the hammer. The head screams at each blow.

OSCAR  
(Rapidly.)  
The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

MISS QUIMBY'S HEAD  
I--

ARTHUR  
(Grunting as he pounds.)  
You--

OSCAR  
He makes me lie down in green pastures.

MISS QUIMBY'S HEAD  
--Love--

ARTHUR  
(Blood spurts upon him.)  
--Filthy--

OSCAR  
He leads me beside the still waters.

MISS QUIMBY'S HEAD  
--You!

ARTHUR  
--Whore!

With the final blow, the head screeches and lies still.

OSCAR  
He restoreth my soul.

Overcome, ARTHUR holds onto OSCAR for support.

BRAM

Well done, Doyle. You've burst her heart.

OSCAR

Oh, Bram, do shut up.

BRAM

Why, you loquacious popinjay! Telling me to shut up. I suppose you could have done what Doyle did?

ARTHUR

(Weakly.)

Each man kills the thing he loves.

OSCAR

Surely you didn't love her, Arthur?

BRAM

A common kitchen slut.

DVAPARA

(Entering through the unguarded French door.)

Of course he loved her. Otherwise he never could have driven a stake into her flesh.

(Going to the head.)

I understand, Mr. Doyle. I loved her as well.

(Kisses the head's lips.)

As I love all my children.

(Gently places the head in the casket.)

As I love you.

When he turns to them, they all instinctively raise weapons: BRAM the Buddha, OSCAR the crucifix, and ARTHUR the knife.

DVAPARA

(Laughs.)

What paltry weapons, gentlemen. My strength grows hourly, the more I feast.

OSCAR

(Fearful.)

On whom, Dvapara?

DVAPARA

Whom do you love, Mr. Wilde?

(Calls, commandingly.)

Countess!

(OSCAR'S eyes widen in terror.)

You see my power? You cannot guard all ports of entry.

In the tense silence they hear slow somnambulent footsteps. Finally FLORENCE opens the hall doors and comes in wearing her nightgown--she stares at DVAPARA, hypnotized. There are two small but noticeable holes in her neck.

OSCAR

(Going to her.)

Florence!

FLORENCE

(Straining toward DVAPARA as OSCAR holds her back.)

My love.

DVAPARA

Come to me, my sweet one.

OSCAR

You beast.

BRAM

She's so pale!

ARTHUR

(Examining her.)

Let me see her fingernails.

OSCAR

Preying on the innocent--!

ARTHUR

Wilde, she's dangerously anemic.

DVAPARA

You cannot keep her from me, Mr. Wilde. Some night you will leave her side. And when you do--



OSCAR

I'll never leave her.

DVAPARA

Then I will have you first.

ARTHUR

Professor, you will not live another night.

(Pulls the stake from the corpse.)

I have deduced where you rest during the day--

(Taking the hammer and stake to the French door.)

DVAPARA

No man knows where I lie!

ARTHUR

--And you shall never lie there again! When I return, Wilde, we'll give Florence a transfusion.

He dashes out through the French door.  
DVAPARA blocks the crucifix with his cape and brushes past OSCAR to the door.

DVAPARA

He will not return.

(Disappears after ARTHUR.)

FLORENCE

(Reaching for DVAPARA as OSCAR restrains her.)

My life!

OSCAR

Bram, quickly--the garlic!

BRAM

(Obediently replacing the garlic on all the doors.)

Unfortunately, Wilde, this is a bit akin to sealing the cave after the bat has flown.

OSCAR

It's not for him! It's to keep Florence inside.

FLORENCE

He'll return.

(She sits down, still entranced.)  
He'll come for me.

BRAM  
We can't just sit here--

OSCAR  
I shan't leave her.

BRAM  
--While Doyle is out there with that fiend.

OSCAR turns back to FLORENCE, who sits staring straight ahead. He kneels and kisses her hands.

OSCAR  
Come back to me, dearest.

BRAM  
Wilde, are you listening?

OCTAVIA  
(Bustling in through the hall doors, still with her book.)  
Florence! This a most immodest hour to be awake!

BRAM  
She's ill, Mrs. Balcombe.

OSCAR  
Oh, rubbish, Bram! Mrs. Balcombe, Florence has been bitten by a vampire--Professor Dvapara.

OCTAVIA  
That nonsense again! What are those wounds in her neck?  
(OSCAR just looks at her. She crosses herself.)  
He seemed like such a pleasant gentleman.

BRAM  
Wilde, Doyle could be dead by now!

OSCAR  
Bram--

BRAM

(Picks up the knife.)  
I'm going after him.

OSCAR  
You don't know where he's gone.

BRAM  
I'll start with the rectory--

OCTAVIA  
First go to that little chapel by the Lough and get some consecrated Host!  
(They all stare at her in amazement.)  
Wards off vampires. I read about it in a magazine serial.

BRAM  
This is what comes of colonizing these wogs.  
(He disappears through the French doors.)

OSCAR  
Yes, Bram, now he=s colonizing us.

FLORENCE laughs an evil, chilling laugh.  
OSCAR and OCTAVIA stare.

END OF ACT II

ACT III

In the darkness, a sound of hammering. OSCAR, hammer in hand, is revealed closing the wardrobe door. OCTAVIA finishes dressing the wounds on FLORENCE'S neck. FLORENCE sits stock-still, her eyes glazed.

OSCAR

(Picking up BRAM'S glass of milk.)

Are you quite certain this will protect us?

OSCAR ceremoniously pours the milk over the linga. The liquid runs through channels in the sculpture slowly enough that OSCAR is able to collect the runoff in the glass.

OCTAVIA

Siva incarnated himself for the salvation of the world.

OSCAR

A Hindoo Christ?

OCTAVIA

And in the Bhagavad Gita Krishna says, "Whatever god a man worships, it is I who answers the prayer."

OSCAR

(Realizing.)

Perhaps that's why Bram's Buddha repelled Miss Quimby.

OCTAVIA

Europeans are so unenlightened about religion. In parts of the Orient, one can be Buddhist, Hindoo, Muslim, and animist all at the same time. That wet piece of stone's every bit as holy as a piece of the True Cross.

OSCAR

Mrs. Balcombe, where did you come across these unorthodox ideas?

Shyly, she points to her thick book. OSCAR picks it up.

OSCAR

Isis Unveiled.

OCTAVIA

I'm a Theosophist.

OSCAR

(Examining the title page.)

By the notorious Madame Blavatsky.

OCTAVIA

In a former life I was a Druid. I haven't told Mr. Balcombe.

OSCAR

Divining the future with fire-cracked bones?

OCTAVIA

We all have our secrets, you know. That's what makes us Victorian.

OSCAR

Yes, but I never imagined--

OCTAVIA

Pff! Young people assume their elders cultivate illiteracy these days.

(Finishing with the bandages.)

There. At least no one will see those dreadful marks.

OSCAR strides over to FLORENCE and passes his hand before her eyes. No reaction.

OSCAR

She's worse every hour.

(Reaching into the wastebasket.)

Perhaps I can shock her out of it.

OCTAVIA

This is not, Mr. Wilde, a case of the hiccoughs.

OSCAR

(Dangling a dirty worm before FLORENCE'S eyes.)

Florence.

(She does not react.)

I have a present.

FLORENCE finally sees the worm. She eats it.  
OSCAR gasps.

OCTAVIA

Oh, Florence!

OSCAR

My darling, how has he corrupted you?

FLORENCE begins to choke on the worm.

OSCAR

Florence, I'm sorry--I didn't mean--!

OCTAVIA

She's choking, Mr. Wilde!

FLORENCE

(Stops choking, takes a deep breath, breaks the trance.)  
Oh, Oscar--

OSCAR

Florence, you've come back to yourself!

OCTAVIA

My child!

FLORENCE

Hold, me Oscar. I feel as if I've been imprisoned behind a glass. I see everything, yet can do nothing.

OSCAR takes FLORENCE in his arms. She clutches him desperately.

OSCAR

Darling!

FLORENCE

It's been dreadful. He came to my window and called me "Countess," spoke of bathing in virgin's blood. I was terrified but couldn't take my eyes from his. They seemed more beautiful than any I had ever seen--

OSCAR

More than mine?

FLORENCE

You have beautifully poetic eyes, Oscar. His were beautifully...demanding. Perhaps he never spoke at all--I just saw into his mind through those deep dark eyes. And he saw into mine--into my soul as if he=d torn away a veil. I saw myself as he saw me.

(She gasps and closes her eyes.)

I let him in, Oscar. I feel almost as if I've been unfaithful to you.

OCTAVIA

Ridiculous, Florence.

OSCAR

No, no. You were interfered with. He stole your will.

FLORENCE

He's coming back, Oscar. My blood can feel him coming.

(She gasps again, begins to cry.)

My blood wants him--it's burning me from within. Quickly, Oscar, go to my room. The priest that was here for Miss Quimby left me a vial of Holy Water.

OSCAR

If he's coming I can't leave you!

FLORENCE

Neither can you save me if you stay. Your soul is innocent, Oscar, and young. He is older than Stonehenge, older than anything we know, and has the strength of ages. But God's Holy

Water can burn even him!

(She gasps.)

I feel him. I'm losing myself to him.

(OSCAR hesitates. Desperately she pulls his face to hers.)

Are you lost to him already? Dearest--no!

(Studies his eyes.)

You are!

OSCAR

What do you mean?

FLORENCE

How can that be? Without even touching you--he owns you!

OSCAR

That's not true! Kiss me, darling, and you'll see!

FLORENCE

(Holding him back.)

Oscar, no, I see him in your eyes!

OSCAR

You're mistaken! You should only see yourself in my eyes.



FLORENCE

If you seek death, do not choose him.

OSCAR

How can you--? I don't seek--

FLORENCE

(Takes out the bottle of potassium cyanide.)  
Take this instead. I'm sure it's kinder.

OSCAR

(Grabbing it from her, and hiding it.)  
Where did you get that?!

FLORENCE

(Despairing.)  
We are all lost if you are lost. You cannot help me now.

OSCAR

Trust me, I will! Where in your room have you hidden the Holy Water?

OCTAVIA

She's slipping away, Mr. Wilde!

OSCAR

Where, Florence?!

FLORENCE

In the--  
(She gasps. Then, sadly:)  
I cannot love you anymore.

OSCAR

Where?!

FLORENCE

(With great effort.)  
In the chamberpot!  
(She faints.)

OCTAVIA

Oh, Florence!  
(Goes to her.)

OSCAR

Is she--?!

OCTAVIA

She's merely fainted. Hurry, Mr. Wilde. I'll care for her.

OSCAR

(Going to the door.)

I won't be gone a minute. Don't let anyone in--even Mr. Stoker or Mr. Doyle. Who knows what may have happened to them out there. Trust no one. I'll knock on the door--

(He demonstrates a secret knock.)

Keep it locked and leave the wreath on until you hear that knock.

OCTAVIA

Yes, yes. If we must be adolescent, we must. Please go!

OSCAR

The chamberpot--clever girl!

OSCAR goes out, closing the door behind him.

OCTAVIA locks it and replaces the garlic wreath.

OCTAVIA

Florence--

FLORENCE sits up instantly, staring straight ahead with a ghastly smile on her face. OCTAVIA gasps.

FLORENCE

He's coming, aunt. My lover is coming.

OCTAVIA

He is your fiance, Florence. Please speak properly.

FLORENCE

You'll enjoy him, aunt. Everyone does. Inevitably.

OCTAVIA

I'll enjoy him infinitely more when he returns with the Holy Water.

FLORENCE

(Emits a hissing sigh.)

Not--that frustrated poet--Dvapara.

(Angrily.)

This room is a Turkish bath! Open a door, you foolish old hag!

OCTAVIA

I realize you are delirious, but do not speak to me in that tone.

FLORENCE

A window!

OCTAVIA

I'm perfectly comfortable at this temperature, thank you.

FLORENCE

These fumes--they're foul! Hideous garlic--this is Ireland, not Italy!

OCTAVIA

I'm beginning to quite enjoy it, actually.

FLORENCE

And roses! Such an oily scent. Throw them out, aunt.

OCTAVIA

I would as soon throw out a Tudor rose. I'm not so easily tricked as that, young lady. I have noble blood in my veins--

(FLORENCE turns to look at her, almost hungrily.)

--Somewhere back there...

The secret knock is sounded at the door. They both freeze.

FLORENCE

Answer that, will you, aunt?

OCTAVIA

(Going to the door.)

When you have quite recovered, I promise you a serious discussion about your ill manners.

(Opening the door.)

Oh, Mr. Wilde, at last. Florence has been most rude--!

(But no one is there.)

Mr. Wilde? He's gone.

When OCTAVIA is turned toward FLORENCE a bat flies by in the hallway; OCTAVIA does not see it.

FLORENCE

Go into the hallway, aunt. Perhaps he is hiding.

OCTAVIA

Ah. That would be like him.

(Goes into the hall. Offstage.)

Mr. Wilde! Do make an appearance.

(The bat flies by in the direction OCTAVIA has gone.)

The occasion does not call for whimsy! Mr. Wilde!

(Returns and sits next to FLORENCE.)

I refuse to wander the halls exposing my throat while your Mr. Wilde lurks about no doubt giggling to himself.

As she speaks, OCTAVIA'S enormous puff of hair twitches slightly, but she does not notice.

OCTAVIA

I believe I have been most restrained in my behavior toward him thus far, but Florence, I will not permit you to marry a man who is in the habit of admitting vampires to his home.

Imagine the scandal! Vampires have such unfortunate connotations--I'm well aware of them. All that suction and the repugnant habit of sleeping in the earth.

Although neither OCTAVIA nor FLORENCE notices, the twitches are soon accompanied by a thin trickle of blood that runs out of OCTAVIA'S hair and down her face.

OCTAVIA

Could easily be construed as a social indiscretion. No well brought up girl becomes a vampire, Florence. Remember that in case you have any notion of doing so. Now I know there are attractions--I'm aware of those as well. That delicate pallor is rather alluring--but you'd never be able to see it because you wouldn't cast a reflection. Eternal youth must also be quite enticing--even I have on occasion wished to turn my silver back to gold.

(Touches her hair.)

But as you grow older you will see youth as the folly it is. Imagine committing the follies of youth for thousands of years--quite tedious in the end. But of course there is no end. Nothing but ingesting other people's blood for centuries and centuries. Think of that, Florence! Blood, blood, blood, and never a decent cup of tea!

She puts her hand to her hair, and glancing at it, discovers the blood running down her face. She

shrieks. FLORENCE just sits there smiling.

OCTAVIA

(Fighting with her hair.)

I'm bleeding, Florence! Something's in my hair!

(She gets up, flailing.)

It's lacerating my scalp and won't let go! Help me, Florence! Please!

(Staggers toward the door.)

My hair's being torn out by the roots!

(Opening the door.)

Mr. Wilde! Help me, someone! Lord Siva save me!

(Runs off down the hall.)

Mr. Wilde!

(One last scream and then silence.)

FLORENCE sits smiling for a moment, then gets up and removes the garlic wreath from one set of French doors. She opens the door and goes outside. Moments later, OSCAR rushes into the room from the hall, carrying the vial of Holy Water.

OSCAR

Mrs. Balcombe, I heard--!

(He sees that no one is there and peers down the hall.)

Florence, darling!

(Knocks the secret knock.)

I've brought the Holy Water. Ladies, this is distinctly unamusing.

(He sees the open French door.)

OSCAR (Cont.)

My God!

(Runs to it.)

Florence! Mrs. Balcombe!

(Peers outside, calls.)

Florence! No!

He starts to run out, then reconsiders. He puts down the vial and searches the room until he finds what he is looking for: a long scarf, the same one TY wore. He wraps it tightly around his neck and starts to run out again. He reconsiders, stops, retrieves the Holy Water and is about to dash out when he almost runs full-tilt into FLORENCE, who appears in the doorway.

FLORENCE

(No longer somnambulent.)  
Oscar!

OSCAR  
Florence, you're safe!  
(Closes the door behind her.)  
Have you gone mad? Why did you go outside?

FLORENCE  
To follow Aunt.

OSCAR  
Why did she go outside? I thought she understood.

FLORENCE  
Something got in her hair, Oscar. It was horrible. I tried to find her, but...

OSCAR  
Oh, dear.

FLORENCE  
Oh, Oscar, forgive me!  
(She rushes to his arms.)

OSCAR  
(Stopping her at arm's length, suspiciously.)  
Florence--how long were you outdoors?

FLORENCE  
Not more than a few minutes, and that was too long!

OSCAR  
Did you meet anyone out there?

FLORENCE  
(Realizes. Laughs.)  
Oh, Oscar. How silly.

OSCAR  
I'm sorry, Florence. But one can't be too careful.

FLORENCE  
Yes, if you want to kiss me, perhaps you should decapitate me first.

OSCAR

(Laughs, embarrassed. Puts down the vial. Goes to her.)  
Dearest, please accept my apologies.

FLORENCE

(Keeping him at arm's length.)  
One moment. Where have you been?

OSCAR

(Astonished.)  
Why, in your room--as you instructed!

FLORENCE

You've been gone quite a while.

OSCAR

You told me you'd hidden the Holy Water in the chamberpot, but neglected to mention where you'd hidden the chamberpot.

FLORENCE

(Laughs, embarrassed.)  
Oh, dear.

OSCAR

I've had no time to become infected.

FLORENCE

(He holds out his arms to her.)  
Why are you wearing that scarf around your neck?

OSCAR

Florence, this is absurd!

FLORENCE

I agree. Simply remove the scarf.

OSCAR

No!

FLORENCE

What a pair! A fine marriage we'll have if we can't trust each other.

They stare at each other--it is a standoff.

OSCAR

Recite a Bible verse.

FLORENCE

Pick up that wreath of garlic on the door.

OSCAR

After the verse.

FLORENCE

"And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is spilled for many for the remission of sins."

OSCAR

Paraphrase!

FLORENCE

Pick up the wreath!

OSCAR marches to the hall doors, hesitates a moment, then picks up the wreath. She smiles and relaxes, holding out her arms.

FLORENCE

both been tested--

He suddenly throws the wreath to her. She catches it quite expertly in both hands and stands looking at him.

OSCAR

)  
 tested with myself.

FLORENCE

death, understandingly.)

They go to each other with extended arms. At the last second OSCAR grabs her by the wrists and examines her palms--which are a bright, bloody red where the garlic has burned them. She snarls.



OSCAR

Garlic burns you! You are his!

FLORENCE

(Suddenly vicious and animalistic.)  
And you are mine!

As they grapple, OSCAR rips the bandage away  
from her throat, revealing two large, ugly wounds.

OSCAR

Stay away from me, Florence, if you've a drop of humanity left in your veins--!

FLORENCE

Men never understand blood. I want more than a drop, Oscar. Let me kiss your beautiful  
white throat.

OSCAR

(With all his strength, he manages to push her away.)  
You'll never kiss me again.

FLORENCE

(Still confident.)  
Yes, I will, my dearest. I know why you hide here in Ireland. Face the truth about  
yourself, Oscar!

OSCAR

What truth?

FLORENCE

One pitiful poetry prize--is that the extent of your genius?

OSCAR

(Somewhat relieved.)  
You'll not seduce me with insults--

FLORENCE

Can you only criticize, but not create? You fear that truth more than death.

OSCAR

Filthy creature!

FLORENCE

Would you rather die than not live up to expectations?

OSCAR

I confess--!

FLORENCE

(Grabbing the bottle from his pocket.)  
A romantic early death by potassium cyanide!

OSCAR

--I am not an artist!

FLORENCE

Then become one.

(Swallows the bottle's contents, then opens her arms.)  
To love life, an artist must embrace death. You must lose your life to save it.

OSCAR

You are quoting out of context.

(He grabs the vial of Holy Water.)  
The Holy Water, Florence. Do you still want it?

FLORENCE

(Commandingly.)  
Pour it out. I no longer serve petty gods.

OSCAR gasps as against his will he uncorks the vial and spills the contents on the floor.

FLORENCE

Imagine, Oscar. I'll never be a decrepit crone like my aunt. Youth and power--forever!

Suddenly OSCAR makes a break for the hall doors.  
He gets just barely into the hall, then freezes. He backs into the room slowly, DVAPARA following grandly.

DVAPARA

(Without looking at FLORENCE, DVAPARA points at her.)

Be gone.

FLORENCE

He is mine!

DVAPARA

He is mine since before you were mine.

FLORENCE

He belongs to me because he burns for me.

OSCAR

I belong to myself.

(The vampires begin to laugh.)

I am not a lamb for your slaughter.

DVAPARA

No man belongs to himself. He is slave to his desires.

FLORENCE

His hungers. You hunger for me, Oscar.

DVAPARA

No, he does not. I know his passions.

OSCAR

Neither of you know me. I am human and you are not.

FLORENCE

I was.

DVAPARA

I understand human yearnings. Your desire for death. A man collecting worms in a cemetery--

OSCAR

As a joke! To laugh at death--you understood that, didn't you, Florence?

FLORENCE

If I can prove that he loves me, will you let me have him? He's of no use to you if he loves me instead.

DVAPARA

True. He would give me no pleasure then. I want his soul, not only his blood.

OSCAR

My soul is not to be bargained for.

FLORENCE

There'll be no bargaining, Oscar. You thirst for me and I thirst for you. It's very simple, isn't it?

OSCAR

(Backing away toward the glass of milk on the table.)

You are no longer Florence--I can't even call you by that name. You're not a woman anymore.

FLORENCE

No, I'm something more wonderful still. How can you resist me now after desiring me for so long?

OSCAR has reached the table with the glass of milk on it. He turns his back to FLORENCE and sees it.

FLORENCE

Poor darling, I've denied you so much.

OSCAR

(Quietly picking up the glass of milk.)

Yes.

FLORENCE

I was cold to you before. Let me be warm with you now.

(She caresses his shoulders. He shivers.)

A tender kiss is all I ask. Please, Oscar.

OSCAR

I am yours.

FLORENCE

(Turns to DVAPARA.)

Do you concede?

While FLORENCE is turned toward DVAPARA, OSCAR pours the milk into his mouth. DVAPARA sees this.

DVAPARA

(Bowing slightly.)  
You have won what you deserve.

FLORENCE turns to OSCAR and he to her. She grasps the back of his head, pulling his mouth to hers.

FLORENCE  
At last, my love.

As their mouths meet, OSCAR grasps the back of her head as well. They force their lips together violently. OSCAR spews the milk into her mouth. When she realizes what he is doing, she tries to push him away, but he manages to hold her there for a moment longer. Finally she pushes free with a blood-curdling shriek. DVAPARA remains impassive, immobile.

FLORENCE  
Consecrated poison!  
(She coughs and chokes.)  
Your kiss is venom to me. Sacrament of death!

OSCAR  
Of life!

FLORENCE  
(Shrieking.)  
I'm burning--from within!

OSCAR  
(Horrorified, but trying to stay in control.)  
Florence, I did love you--while you lived. I cannot watch you die.

FLORENCE  
(Staggering to DVAPARA.)  
Help me. You who gave me life.

DVAPARA  
Burn. You were foolish to trust him.

FLORENCE  
It is hellfire! Please!

She reaches for DVAPARA, but he pushes her violently away. She falls upon the settee.

FLORENCE

Both of you! Damned me with your love, Dvapara!

She turns her face away, hiding it in the settee as smoke issues from her mouth.

FLORENCE

(In a final, agonizing scream.)

Oscar!

OSCAR

(Overcome, he starts toward her.)

Florence!

DVAPARA

(Preventing OSCAR from going to her.)

Do not. She will burn you as well.

A dying moan escapes her lips in addition to the smoke.

DVAPARA

Pity is a fatal emotion.

OSCAR

(His face in his hands.)

Florence. Oh, darling...

FLORENCE is quiet and the smoke abates. Silence for a long moment, then OSCAR slowly turns to DVAPARA, who smiles at him.

DVAPARA

What weapons have you left?

OSCAR

None.

(Goes to FLORENCE, cradles her in his arms.)

Does it give you pleasure, to destroy such beauty? To desecrate purity?

DVAPARA

Yes. It is the most profound pleasure imaginable. Did you not feel it as you immolated her?

OSCAR

Horror is all I felt.

DVAPARA

Ecstasy, is it not? You see, I do have human emotions.

OSCAR

To corrupt the innocent--when there is no reason--

DVAPARA

(Staring into OSCAR'S eyes.)

Innocence is reason enough.

(Taking OSCAR'S hand.)

Now you understand me...Mr. Wilde? The innocent as well as the guilty are mine, but the innocent give me much more satisfaction.

OSCAR

(Fighting hypnosis as DVAPARA draws him closer.)

Who gives you this right--?

DVAPARA

Death takes all. That is my right--given to me by every living soul. The woman and the man. The old and the young. The quick...become the dead.

OSCAR

(Realizing.)

And taking life--you never die.

DVAPARA

Exactly, my child. How can death die?

OSCAR

And yet you also give life.

DVAPARA

(Caressing OSCAR.)

Eternally. You are very handsome, Mr. Wilde.

OSCAR

No, I'm not at all.

DVAPARA

Your soul has beauty. And beauty is a form of genius--is higher, indeed, than genius, as

it needs no explanation.

(DVAPARA opens OSCAR'S shirt.)

But there will come a day when your face will be wrinkled and wizen, your eyes dim and colorless, the grace of your figure broken and deformed.

OSCAR

All men age.

DVAPARA

You will degenerate into a hideous puppet, haunted by the memory of passions you feared, and the exquisite temptation you had not the courage to yield to. I offer youth, youth! There is absolutely nothing in the world but youth!

OSCAR

(Weakly.)

Knowledge...

DVAPARA

(DVAPARA opens his own shirt.)

Of good and evil? Neither exists. Only life...and death. Not one blossom of your loveliness will fade. Not one pulse of your life will ever weaken.

(Cuts his own chest with his fingernail; blood seeps out.)

I offer you the secrets of centuries. The whispered intimacies of Sappho's bedchamber, Chaucer's last unfinished poem, the identity of Marlowe's murderer. I have drunk of their lives and offer them to you.

OSCAR

(Almost somnambulent.)

Plagiarist...

DVAPARA

They all made love to death. There are other promises of everlasting life--but are they as sure as mine?

(Grasps the back of OSCAR'S head.)

Do this in remembrance of me.

(Forces OSCAR to drink the blood from his chest.)

You never need fear the grave or worms again. In triumph you will make the grave your home, and the worms your slaves. Five millenia I have searched for you.

(Pulls OSCAR'S head back. OSCAR'S lips are bloody.)

We are brothers in blood--forever bound to one another.

OSCAR is quite hypnotized. DVAPARA rears back his head to bite--showing his fangs for the first time--and plunges his teeth into OSCAR'S neck.



OSCAR gasps and reacts sensually, arching his back and releasing an ecstatic sigh. Suddenly ARTHUR and BRAM dash into the room through the hall doors.

ARTHUR

(As he spies the garland from the hall doors.)  
Quickly, Stoker, the garlic.

BRAM

(Seeing FLORENCE, he goes to her.)  
Florence! My God!

DVAPARA snarls and lets OSCAR slip unconscious to the floor.

ARTHUR

The wreath! Bram! Now!

BRAM throws it to him and he quickly replaces it on the door.

DVAPARA

(Laughing as BRAM and ARTHUR raise crucifixes.)  
Mr. Doyle, your addiction has made you a gibbering madman in this life as well! These trinkets can no longer hold me. After tonight's feast I am omnipotent!  
(He gestures and the crucifixes fly from their hands.)

BRAM

(Holding FLORENCE.)  
Florence.

ARTHUR

Oscar, are you all right?

OSCAR manages to moan.

DVAPARA

He is mine. You are too late. Today he will share my grave.

BRAM

(Looking up with tear-stained eyes.)  
You have no grave.

ARTHUR

And you shall not escape this room.

DVAPARA

I will leave this room--after I have annointed it with your blood.

BRAM

But where will you go?

ARTHUR

Your grave is no more.

DVAPARA

You could not have found it.

ARTHUR

That is chalk on your shoes, isn't it Professor?

DVAPARA

(Looks at his shoes. There is a whitish substance on them.)  
What of it?

BRAM

Doyle noticed it earlier.

ARTHUR

It bears a remarkable similarity to a small chalk cliff we passed as we drove by the Lough on our way here.

DVAPARA

This county abounds in chalk cliffs.

BRAM

Very few of them abut peat bogs.

ARTHUR

Which have a distinctive odor reminiscent of your cape.

DVAPARA

The bog and the cliff parallel each other for miles.

ARTHUR

But there is only one Neolithic circle of stones where the bog meets the cliff.

BRAM

And it was very clear where the ground had been recently disturbed--

ARTHUR

Which led us to a mahogany sarcophagus full of earth in a hollow beneath a fallen monolith.

BRAM

That casket lies in splinters.

DVAPARA

(After a pause.)

With but a handful of that earth I can make any grave my own.

BRAM

Even when that earth is thoroughly mixed with--

(He takes out a Host.)

Consecrated Host?

ARTHUR

We've scattered them all over the monolith as well.

DVAPARA

Where did you find those biscuits?

BRAM

I took them from that little church on the road near the Lough.

ARTHUR begins edging toward the linga.

DVAPARA

(Advancing upon BRAM, who holds up the Host in defense.)

And how did you enter the sanctuary?

BRAM

I broke a window and crawled inside.

DVAPARA

(Plucking the Host from Bram's hand.)

You stole this.

BRAM

(Astonished.)

Yes.

DVAPARA

Stolen sacraments are no longer consecrated. This is merely bread, not bodyB

(He eats it.)

B Given for you. My grave is still my own.

ARTHUR

(Rushing him with the linga.)

But you must reach it first!

DVAPARA

Enough!

DVAPARA gestures toward ARTHUR. The mere gesture slams ARTHUR backward against the wall.

BRAM

(Rushing DVAPARA with his Buddha.)

Die, fiend, for Florence!

With a mere glance at BRAM, DVAPARA sends him reeling backwards. DVAPARA turns toward OSCAR.

DVAPARA

Come, Mr. Wilde. Let your friends witness our consummation.

He gestures toward OSCAR, who suddenly rises to his feet against his will.

ARTHUR

No, Oscar. Religion has failed! You have only your will!

BRAM

He is death!

DVAPARA

For him, I am life. Come.

OSCAR

(Walking toward DVAPARA but fighting the force.)

You...have murdered Florence.

ARTHUR

Oscar, you decide your fate! Reason, not passion!

OSCAR

You have murdered me.

DVAPARA

I have not murdered you. We are one.

OSCAR

And you have murdered yourself.

(Reaches DVAPARA.)

Your appetites have betrayed you.

DVAPARA

(Grabbing OSCAR by the hair, forcing his head back.)

What foolishness is this?

OSCAR

(Smiles.)

The day of judgement is upon us.

ARTHUR

Morning is breaking, Dvapara!

BRAM

The sun is rising by now.

DVAPARA

(Smiles, but is nervous.)

That is absurd. There's been no cockcrow.

OSCAR

That's because we ate the cock for dinner last night.

BRAM

A dreadfully tough bird.

DVAPARA

(Hurling OSCAR across the room.)

Fools! You have made matters that much worse for yourselves.

(Runs to the hall doors.)

When next the sun goes down--!

ARTHUR

The earth will sleep peacefully once more.

DVAPARA

(Seeing the wreath on the door, he hisses.)

Garlic!

BRAM

For you will no longer corrupt its face!

DVAPARA

(Dashes to one set of French doors.)

You cannot imprison me!

(Sees another wreath.)

No!

OSCAR

You have imprisoned yourself. When a creature lives in darkness--

DVAPARA

(Going to the other set of French doors.)

I shall burst this room asunder!

OSCAR

--Eventually its eyes atrophy.

DVAPARA

(Sees the wreath on that door as well.)

Remove this contagion!

OSCAR

Destroy this room, destroy us all--you shall die here with your victims!

DVAPARA

(Roaring.)

Remove it!

He gestures toward OSCAR, who goes to the French doors quite involuntarily.

ARTHUR

Fight him, Oscar! His power is weakening!

DVAPARA

Go!

BRAM

Don't let him control you!

DVAPARA

Take it off.

OSCAR

No!

(Fighting the urge, he reaches toward the wreath.)

BRAM

Stop, Oscar!

DVAPARA

Now!

OSCAR

(Reaching the wreath.)

I can't...help myself.

(Tears the wreath off the door.)

ARTHUR

No!

DVAPARA

(Starts toward the door.)

Open it.

OSCAR

Very well.

DVAPARA

I shall return for you tonight. Only the night can be trusted--for it returns faithfully.

OSCAR

As does the day!

OSCAR throws open the long, thick drapes and strong morning sunlight streams into the room. DVAPARA is knocked backward in midstride by the burning rays.

DVAPARA

(With a hideous, inhuman cry.)

Hellfire!!

AR  
 God's love!

DVAPARA writhes in agony, screaming.

PARA  
 calds my flesh!

BRAM and ARTHUR stumble forward, as if  
 breaking free of DVAPARA'S power.

BRAM

HUR  
 e others suffer!

PARA  
 You cannot burn me out of you!

OSCAR  
 e, gives you death!

OSCAR throws open the wardrobe. The inside  
 walls have been covered with icons of myriad  
 religions. The three of them grab the weakened  
 DVAPARA and thrust him into the wardrobe.

PARA  
 dge with my power!

ARTHUR  
 (Slamming shut the doors of the wardrobe.)  
 There is no hiding from the light of truth!

OSCAR  
 It purifies the soul!

DVAPARA  
 Centuries die with me! Sappho's secrets! Marlowe's murderer!

OSCAR



You!

DVAPARA

(From within the wardrobe.)

But I am with you forever  
Bin your blood!

(He gives a final wailing cry as smoke billows forth.)

Silence as the cry ceases and the smoke begins to abate. OSCAR, ARTHUR, and BRAM stand staring. Suddenly, OCTAVIA bustles in through the haze, her hair bloodied and tumbling down around her shoulders. It has turned a youthful gold color.

OCTAVIA

Oh, this dreadful smoke! How I abhor cigars! If we had proper help they would freshen this room on a regular basis. Where have all the servants gone?!

(She goes to the wardrobe.)

OSCAR

No, Mrs. Balcombe!

ARTHUR

Don't!

BRAM

Please!

OCTAVIA, ignoring them, throws open the wardrobe. DVAPARA'S charred skeleton falls out on top of her. She screams and falls to the floor. The men all rush to her aid.

OSCAR

Mrs. Balcombe, I asked you not to--

BRAM

Are you quite well?

ARTHUR

What has happened to your hair?

OSCAR

It's gone quite gold!

OCTAVIA

(As OSCAR helps her up.)

With grief! Mr. Wilde, I must warn you I have strong reservations about permitting my niece to marry a man with a skeleton in his closet! As for my coiffure, it is a shambles--and I have no idea why.

OSCAR

You have no memory of last night?

OCTAVIA

Only that I slept quite badly. Florence and I shall return to London at once.

(She looks behind them.)

Florence!

FLORENCE has risen through the clearing haze, looking somewhat dazed but healthy. There are no marks on her neck. OCTAVIA goes to her without hesitation, but the men hold back.

OSCAR AND BRAM

(Both going toward her.)

Florence!

(They stop and look at each other a moment.)

OSCAR

(Delighted but cautious.)

You're...well.

FLORENCE

(Dazed.)

I feel as though something horrid has been burned out of me from within.

OSCAR

(Taking her in his arms.)

It has, dearest, been burned out of all our lives.

FLORENCE suddenly looks into OSCAR'S eyes, gasps, then struggles to get away as he holds her.

OSCAR

What is it, Florence?

FLORENCE

(Forcing herself to look into his eyes.)

You...have killed me, Oscar.

OSCAR  
But you live! And I love you!

FLORENCE  
(Quietly.)  
I know. But I am too afraid. Forgive me.

OSCAR  
Can you not trust me?

FLORENCE  
No! Now that I've seen you through his eyes.

Crying, she breaks from him and starts to run from the room.

OSCAR  
Florence!

BRAM  
(Stepping in her way.)  
Florence.

FLORENCE  
(Looking in his eyes.)  
Oh, Bram, please just take me away.

BRAM looks at OSCAR.

OCTAVIA  
That has been my dearest wish since rising this morning.  
(Takes FLORENCE'S arm and leads her out.)  
Why I was sleeping under a table in the hallway I shall never know.  
(They are gone.)

ARTHUR and BRAM just look at OSCAR, who is devastated.

BRAM  
Wilde, I--

ARTHUR  
Oh, do shut up, Stoker.

OSCAR

(Smiles bravely.)  
I saved her. The memory at least is precious.

ARTHUR  
I'd rather we didn't remember it.

BRAM  
What?

ARTHUR  
One word of this in London and we'll all be branded mad. We'd none of us have a career after consorting with vampires. It completely lacks reason.

OSCAR  
Reason be damned--we saw it! I drank his blood.  
(They stare.)  
I've made love to death.

ARTHUR  
Gentlemen, I'm asking you to swear silence.

OSCAR  
Creatures such as Dvapara breed in secrecy and darkness.

BRAM  
(Examining the wardrobe.)  
Why look at this!

ARTHUR  
(Pricking his thumb with his syringe.)  
A blood swear, gentlemen.

BRAM  
His cape isn't even singed.

OSCAR  
We=re changedBtransubstantiated!

ARTHUR  
Burn it.

BRAM  
(Putting on the cape.)  
No, I've quite admired it from the first.

OSCAR

We have witnessed the devil make manifest the power of God!

BRAM

(Pricking his thumb with the syringe.)  
Arthur is right. We have our reputations to think of.

OSCAR

Reputations be damned--!

BRAM

And Miss Balcombe's.

OSCAR

(Looks at them, sighs heavily.)  
Ah. Florence. Then let us deny the miracle thrice before cockcrow. But must it be a blood swear? Can't we simply trust each other?  
(They just look at him.)  
In saving our lives, we lose our innocence.  
(Pricking his thumb with the syringe.)  
By the pricking of my thumbs--

ALL THREE

Something wicked this way comes.

ARTHUR

Plagiarist.

BRAM

Really, Wilde, if you plan to become a professor of aesthetics, you must learn to be more obscure.

ARTHUR

(As they jam their thumbs together.)  
We swear never to speak--

BRAM

(Looking at OSCAR.)  
--Nor write--

ARTHUR

--About this evening ever again in our lives. I, Arthur Conan Doyle, so swear.

BRAM

I, Abraham Stoker, so swear.

OSCAR

I, Oscar Fingall O'Flahertie Wills Wilde, so swear.

They shudder as blood mingles, then suck their thumbs.

BRAM

(Dashing out with a flourish of the cape.)  
Gentlemen, I must see to Florence. Good morning.

ARTHUR

I've some details to attend to as well, Oscar, before I return to Edinburgh.

OSCAR

Tell me, Arthur. Dvapara's tribe--the Nagas--

ARTHUR

Headhunters nowadays. They practice a very primitive religion.

OSCAR

But in prehistory--?

ARTHUR

They were...sun worshippers.

OSCAR

Ah. Science is certainly a colder comfort.

ARTHUR

(Looking at the syringe as he replaces it in his bag.)  
We each take comfort where we may. Farewell, Oscar.  
(He leaves.)

OSCAR

Sun worshippers.

(Calling after him.)  
An important piece of evidence to have overlooked, my friend. I hope you've no plans to take up amateur detective work.

As OSCAR strokes the linga gently, almost as if hypnotized, MISS QUIMBY rises out of her coffin, looking puzzled. She feels her neck, then wanders out of the room through the hall door. OSCAR does not see her. After a moment, OCTAVIA

appears in the doorway with a very serious look on her face. Having wiped away the blood, she looks almost pretty with her new golden hair. She watches OSCAR stroke the linga, then she snatches up one of DVAPARA'S bones. OSCAR sees her.

OSCAR

Fire-cracked bones--the secrets of the ages, dear lady.

OCTAVIA

(Clutching the bone, smiling.)  
And portents of the future.

FLORENCE

(Offstage.)  
Aunt, do hurry!

OCTAVIA

(Formally.)  
Good day, Mr. Wilde.

She leaves. OSCAR strokes the linga and squints into the brilliant dawn. TY appears in the French door, bathed in morning light. He and OSCAR stare at each other, thinking of the future.

THE END