

**SIDES FOR *RUNNING WILDE* AUDITIONS:
OSCAR AND GUSSIE (ACT 1, SC. 2)
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(OSCAR is the 27-year-old Oscar Wilde. GUSSIE is Augusta Windermere, the self-appointed *grande dame* of Kingston, Ontario society. It is 1882, and the setting is the living room of a hotel suite in Kingston, where OSCAR is staying. There is a third character present: Gwen Darlington, GUSSIE's beautiful young niece, who has no lines here, and so need not appear onstage in the audition.)

OSCAR: Madam, Miss Darlington's affectionate reference to you as her Aunt Gussie places me at a disadvantage. Might I know your correct name? (Offers his hand.)

GUSSIE (takes his hand): I am Mrs. Augusta Windermere. Of the Cumberland Windermeres.

OSCAR (pretending to be impressed): The *Cumberland* Windermeres! And this, if I may say so, is a too, too beautiful fan.

GUSSIE: Do you like it? I seldom carry it with me. I know they remain *de rigueur* among the ladies of London and the Continent, but here in Canada it seems merely ostentatious. (Flutters it.)

OSCAR: I respectfully disagree, it is charming.

GUSSIE: I'm so glad you think so. It was an anniversary gift from my dear husband Basil.

OSCAR: Parisian, is it not? From the atelier of Monsieur Montfleury? Late eighteenth century, I should think.

GUSSIE: It is indeed a Montfleury. Seventeen ninety-two. You outshine even your reputation.

OSCAR: It is my goal in life. I do hope you carry it today in my honour.

GUSSIE: I cannot lie. I carry it today because tomorrow is once again our wedding anniversary.

OSCAR: A much more important reason.

GUSSIE: But I regret to add that Basil is now very ill.

OSCAR: Oh, dear! I am very sorry to hear it.

GUSSIE: Thank you. It cheers his spirits to see it on my person, so I have been getting used to its ostentation (flutters again), and struggling to learn Fanology. You know: the secret language of fans.

OSCAR: Ah, "Fanology." I must say, I've always considered that a rather affected –

GUSSIE: I'm not fluent, but I do know some of the basics. (Fan in left hand, opened:) Come talk to me.

OSCAR: But we're already / talking.

GUSSIE (Places fan across her heart): I love you. (Presents it to him, shut:) Do you love me? (Hits the palm of her other hand with fan:) I *demand* that you love me! (Puts closed fan to her lips:) You may kiss me now.

OSCAR: Madam, I hardly know you.

GUSSIE: No, no, you impetuous boy, I'm demonstrating Fanology.

OSCAR: Oh, of course you are, what a relief, thank you, most elucidating. (To GWEN:) Now, then –

GUSSIE: I've been choreographing the gestures into a dance, which I will perform for Basil tomorrow evening, to a string ensemble playing Beethoven.

OSCAR: I'm sure that will restore him greatly. (Turns to GWEN.) Now, then –

GUSSIE: The Late Quartets. Composed shortly before his death. Beethoven's.

OSCAR: How jolly. (Turns to GWEN.) Now, then –

GUSSIE: Onstage costume changes will be involved. The musicians will be blindfolded.

OSCAR: Thank you so much for that unforgettable imagery. (Turns to GWEN.) Now, then –

GUSSIE: Would you like to see a brief excerpt?

OSCAR: Oh, God, please no. (Turns to GWEN.) Now, then –

GUSSIE: Very well. (She begins dancing with the fan and singing a theme from one of Beethoven's Late Quartets. [The music need not be accurate for audition purposes.] She stops. Brief silence.) I will be costumed rather differently.

OSCAR: I see. Despite myself. (Turns to GWEN.) Now, then! You are, at last, Miss Gwendolen Darlington?
