

**SIDES FOR *RUNNING WILDE* AUDITIONS:  
GUSSIE, OSCAR AND DAVENPORT (ACT 1, SC. 2)  
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(OSCAR is the 27-year-old Oscar Wilde. GUSSIE is the *grande dame* of Kingston society, and is trying to prevent her niece GWEN from marrying a hotel bellboy named ALAN. DAVENPORT is OSCAR's African-American valet from New York City.)

GUSSIE: You do, I hope, remember a boy at Oxford named Dorian Windermere?

OSCAR: Why, yes! Indeed, I was telling Davenport about him earlier.

GUSSIE: He was a young cousin of my husband's.

OSCAR (to DAVENPORT): So he *did* spring from the loins of the Cumberland Windermeres. (This refers to an earlier private joke shared by OSCAR and DAVENPORT; DAVENPORT tries to hide his amusement.)

GUSSIE: His relationship with you, Oscar, was the best thing that ever happened to him. What you thought a lighthearted fling, he considered the great love of his life. And he died for it.

OSCAR: Oh, no! He *died*? Over *me*?

GUSSIE: Technically, no, he was struck by lightning during a croquet match in Chichester, but I'm sure he was thinking of you at the time. It's so sad that he never got to be old. It would have become him so. I have a lovely mental picture of him with his hair all grey. (OSCAR, inspired by this, begins another note, but is distracted by this:) Upon his death, I found a collection of love letters and poems that you had written to him.

OSCAR: Oh! Quite!

GUSSIE: Quite. Containing detailed descriptions of activities which are illegal in most civilised nations. If you don't marry Gwendolen, I shall release those letters, and I'm so sorry, dear boy, but you will go to prison.

OSCAR: I shall simply deny it! I'll say they're forgeries!

GUSSIE: No one writes like you, Oscar. Even your distinctive penmanship is famous.

OSCAR (slipping into his native Irish accent): God help me, I'll not be wedding your niece! We barely know each other, surely! And what of young Alan!

GUSSIE: She'll get over him. I've never seen a boy easier to get over.

OSCAR: Sure and I hope to – (Stops, carefully restores his English accent.) I hope some day to marry a woman I shall love, in the holy sacrament of matrimony. Your fraudulent certificate would prevent that.

GUSSIE: So would your letters. So you will marry Gwen.

OSCAR: And thus would you break your promise to your sister that she marry well.

GUSSIE: Don't underestimate your name and family, Irish or not.

OSCAR: I would never underestimate my beloved family! I speak of Gwen's and Alan's broken hearts! She'd wind up hating both you and me, and I shouldn't blame her an iota!

GUSSIE: Better that than marrying into the working class.

OSCAR (stands): I think that will be all, Madam. (DAVENPORT crosses to armoire, gets GUSSIE's hat, coat and gloves.) It seems to me that I am trespassing on your valuable time. No doubt you have many other calls of a similar character to make in the neighbourhood.

GUSSIE (as DAVENPORT puts her coat on her): You can quip all you want, Oscar –

OSCAR: Yes, I can, Augusta. It's a gift.

GUSSIE: But if you have any of that Irish instinct for self-preservation, you will do as I say. And don't forget, in addition to all this – you can have Gwendolen! (DAVENPORT gives her her hat and gloves.) Am I forgetting something?

DAVENPORT (slamming the armoire door, startling GUSSIE and OSCAR): I *got* it! Mrs. Windermere, I finally figured out who you remind me of!

GUSSIE: Excuse me?

DAVENPORT: My, that was botherin me, but I got it now. You call to mind a colored lady I knew in Chicago.

OSCAR: I say, steady, Davenport.

DAVENPORT: She ran a real fine house of prostitution on the South Side, for colored men only.

OSCAR: Davenport!

GUSSIE: How dare you!

DAVENPORT: I couldn't think who you put me in mind of, until you said, "You can have Gwendolen." That was just how she talked when she was handin out her whores.

GUSSIE: *How dare* you! Oscar, control your boy!

OSCAR: Davenport, for shame! Augusta, I apologize!

GUSSIE: I'll accept your apology when you've dismissed him!

OSCAR: Davenport, you're dismissed!

GUSSIE: Oscar. I will be back here tomorrow afternoon, before your train leaves, at which time I expect to see you *with* that certificate of the marriage, and *without* this boy in your service. (Starts to exit, stops.) And Davenport, give me back my penny!

DAVENPORT (gives back penny): Happy anniversary, Ma'am. (GUSSIE exits to corridor. DAVENPORT closes door.)

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