

OSCAR WILDE'S LAST WORDS

"He's dying on cerebral meningitis," the doctor informed Dupoirier.

"How long does he have, then?"

"Not long."

The two men entered Mr. Wilde's chamber. Low cries of agony emanated from the bed as Mr. Wilde lay wrapped in warm blankets, his eyes closed.

"He's been having nightmares," Dupoirier told the doctor.

"He's sleeping then?"

Dupoirier nodded.

Mr. Wilde's eyes opened and took in the doctor. "I'm no more asleep than you are a gentleman." He then winced from the effort of speaking.

"Perhaps it's best if you simply rest," Dupoirier suggested.

"No need to overdue the cordiality. I've made provisions for you to collect the ten pounds I owe you."

Dupoirier laughed nervously. "That's hardly my concern at this juncture. Your health ..."

"My health! Bullocks!" Mr. Wilde cried, holding his head in anguish. "My bloody head is about to burst. Where's that morphia?"

"I've already administered a strong dose. I'm afraid I can do no more."

"You're afraid? I'm the one paying the medical bill."

The doctor smiled weakly. "I must advise against further speech."

Mr. Wilde coughed and wheezed, then shook his head in a vain attempt to rid himself of the demons within. He stopped and stared wide-eyed at Dupoirier.

“I’m at the end, my friend.”

Wilde looked about the room as if seeing it for the first time.

“Bloody hell. The décor in this room is dreadful. Either that wallpaper goes or I go.”

With that, he gasped for breath, then his head fell back on the pillow. He was motionless.

“He doesn’t like the wallpaper?” Dupoirier mused. “I chose the pattern myself. All these years, I had no idea.”

“I wonder why he said nothing of it until now.”

Mr. Wilde reopened his eyes. “You ignorant git! I was making a witty dramatic exit. You ignoramus!”

“What? What’s that?”

“Don’t you recognize wit, you fools. I’m Oscar Wilde, for Christ’s sake. What would you have me say as my final words? ‘Goodbye and good luck?’ ‘So long?’ ‘See you in hell?’”

The doctor turned to Dupoirier. “‘Either the wallpaper goes or I go.’ Oh, yes, I see. Very droll. Do you see the wit, Dupoirier?”

“Yes, yes. Very clever.”

Mr. Wilde rolled his eyes. “I don’t know why I bother. Bloody hell. I’m surrounded by fucking morons.”

He suddenly uttered a cry of pain and clutched his heart. He then lay back, limp and silent.

“Perhaps I should administer another shot,” the doctor thought, approaching the bed. He checked Mr. Wilde’s vital signs, then put away the medication.

“He’s dead,” he announced.

Suddenly, there was a knock at the bedroom door. Dupoirier rose to meet the visitor.

“Ross, my good man! So good of you to come.”

“I left as soon as I heard he was ill. Tell me, how is he?”

Dupoirier dropped his head. “He’s just passed on.”

“I’m too late.”

Ross approached the lifeless figure and took the man’s hand in his own.

“We shall all miss his magnificent wit and charm.”

Dupoirier and the doctor nodded vigorously.

“A terrible loss to all,” Dupoirier ruminated.

“Tell me,” Ross requested, “what were his final words?”

Dupoirier smiled. “Ah, Ross, he was the wit till the very end. His last words were ‘Either this wallpaper goes or I go’.”