

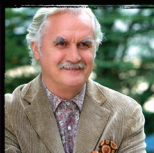
F O R Y O U R C O N S I D E R A T I O N

BEST SCREENPLAY

MOTION PICTURE

Ronald Harwood

EVERY DIVA DESERVES AN ENCORE

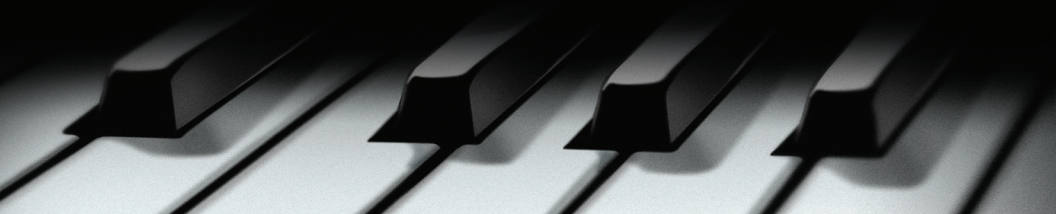


maggie smith

QUARTET

THE AWARD-WINNING COMEDY
FROM DIRECTOR **DUSTIN HOFFMAN**

tom courtenay billy connolly pauline collins



QUARTET

Screenplay by
Ronald Harwood



INT. COMMON ROOM - EARLY MORNING

LETITIA DAVIS, 70's, seated at a piano. The score in front of her is THE BRINDISI from LA TRAVIATA, which she is checking. She starts to play. FELICITY LIDDLE, 70's, page turner, is standing nearby. Reveal BOBBY SWANSON, 70's, conductor, gesturing and whispering musical terms. All we may hear is -

BOBBY
(whispering)
...allegretto -

She starts again. MUSIC continues throughout credits -

INT. ANNE LANGLEY'S ROOM - EARLY MORNING

A FINGER stirs gargle into a glass of water. The glass is then raised to the mouth of ANNE LANGLEY, 70, soprano. She takes a mouthful and gargles. While vocalising, the piano kicks into an ORCHESTRATION of the Brindisi, which continues -

INT. SANITORIUM - EARLY MORNING

A CARIBBEAN NURSE'S HANDS (DWAYNE, 20's/30's) bandaging a female leg, (OCTAVIA, 70's, CHORUS). She sits in a wheelchair, holding the score, mouthing the words in Italian. MUSIC continues -

INT. SWIMMING POOL - EARLY MORNING

CECILY (CISSY) ROBSON, 70, contralto, bosomy and bountiful, walking the width of the swimming pool rotating her arms. SHERYL, 30's, nurse, standing nearby. CISSY has a CD player above water, corded around her neck, while listening to the Brindisi with earphones on, moving her lips. As she emerges from the pool, SHERYL helps her don a bathrobe. MUSIC continues -

INT. FITNESS ROOM - EARLY MORNING

WILFRED (WILF) BOND, 70, baritone, and a few residents, are doing yoga. WILF mouths the score he's holding, while being stretched by a FEMALE NURSE, TRACY, 30's, all the while appreciating her form. MUSIC continues -

INT. LEO'S ROOM- EARLY MORNING

A MALE HAND (LEO'S, 70's) draws a bow across a single string of a cello. The string is tightened. The bow is drawn again. Better. MUSIC continues -

INT. CEDRIC'S ROOM - EARLY MORNING

CEDRIC LIVINGSTONE, 70's, former counter-tenor, opera director and self-proclaimed critic, applying rouge to his cheeks, completing his otherwise light street make-up. He powders, while checking the score next to him. He checks the time, 7.40 am, rises in his dressing gown, crosses to his closet and selects a caftan from his wall-to-wall collection. MUSIC continues -

INT. REGGIE'S ROOM - EARLY MORNING

REGINALD (REGGIE) PAGET, 70's, tenor, trim, fit, half-moon glasses on the end of his nose, holds the score, vocalising, while standing in front of a mirror adjusting his cravat. MUSIC continues -

INT. OLLY FISHER'S ROOM - EARLY MORNING

OLLY FISHER, 70's, clarinettist. He tightens a reed onto his mouthpiece, practices a phrase, grimaces. OLLY stops mid-phrase. ORCHESTRATION halts. Silence. He inhales and exhales with great concentration. Overlap NOBBY chatter -

EXT. BEECHAM HOUSE - MORNING

NOBBY, gardener, 50ish, drinks coffee and talks to SIMON, 20, while pushing a wheelbarrow filled with weeds alongside BEECHAM HOUSE. We might pick up a word or two of what he's saying. SIMON follows his directions. NOBBY continues to chatter as he points to a brick or stone. SIMON picks it up and brings it to him. NOBBY practices a curl, puts it in the wheelbarrow. He continues to walk next to the house, a handsome mansion. Mysterious and inviting.

NOBBY hears LETITIA in the COMMON ROOM, practicing the Brindisi. He looks in, sees vaguely and slightly distorted, people milling about, finding seats, faint chatter.

INT. COMMON ROOM - MORNING

THE 30 or so ELDERLY OPERA SINGERS of Beecham House taking their seats, including OCTAVIA, in a wheelchair, aided by SHERYL. Some hold scores. Among them REGGIE, CISSY, WILF, GEORGE and HARRY. Some musicians carry their instruments - TONY ROSE, 70's trumpet and DAVE TRUBECK, 70's pianist, DAPHNE MORGAN, 60's, harpist, LEO CASSEL, cellist, and CEDRIC. DR. LUCY COGAN, 30's, attractive, sits on the side, with ANNE LANGLEY.

CEDRIC, seated on a throne-like chair, nods to BOBBY. All eyes on BOBBY. He taps a pencil, raises it, nods to LETITIA.

FELICITY, beside her, nervous, as she prepares to turn the pages.

LETITIA plays the introduction to the Brindisi. BOBBY cues the chorus. No-one sings. Some RESIDENTS are amused, others confused. BOBBY whispers to LETITIA.

Watching, eyes narrowed, CEDRIC, not happy.

BOBBY again cues the residents and they begin to sing. They give it their all.

During this, FELICITY fumbles turning a page. LETITIA, irritated, nods repeatedly. FELICITY recovers.

At the end, BOBBY finishes with a flourish, then turns to CEDRIC. All look at him expectantly. He keeps them waiting, then:

CEDRIC
Nowhere near to where you should
be, Bobby.

BOBBY nods, continues.

CEDRIC (CONT'D)
(looks to WILF in the
chorus)
Wilf, I couldn't work out what you
were doing, you were much too fast
and we had awful ensemble problems
there. Can we hear it from Bar 42?

LETITIA and FELICITY, flustered, look for it in the score. BOBBY alert, cues them.

WILF
(taking the mickey, sings
a tad and stops)
It's too fast Bobby. Sorry Cedric.
(starts again, stops)
Too slow Bobby. Sorry Cedric.
(starts again, stops)
Now it's too fast Bobby. Sorry
Cedric.

Some CHORUS MEMBERS giggle.

CEDRIC
Silenzio. You never followed the
conductor, did you? You always
thought you were superior.

WILF
I am.

NIGEL, 70's, BARITONE, sings the phrase that CEDRIC requested. WILF stares him down as CEDRIC smiles.

CEDRIC
Thank you, Nigel. Lotte, in bars
17, 18, 19, you were flat.

LOTTE
No, I don't think I was. I think
the piano needs tuning.

CEDRIC
(looks at ANNE LANGLEY)
Anne, would you mind singing it?

ANNE LANGLEY
(as she's getting up)
I don't do chorus, Cedric.
(walking toward the door)
I'm going to have my breakfast.

CEDRIC
(watches her go, turns to
CISSY)
Cissy, you're still not certain of
the words. We only have a month and
a half -

WILF
(mischievously)
That's six weeks, isn't it,
Reggie?

REGGIE
(CEDRIC gives them a hard
look)
Yes, six weeks, three days -

WILF
- one hour -

REGGIE
Give or take a minute -

WILF
And seconds out!

CISSY tries to untangle her earphones.

CEDRIC
(enunciates each word)
Cissy - please - pay - attention.

CISSY
Ready.

CEDRIC
(sarcastically)
Of course you are.
(MORE)

CEDRIC (CONT'D)

Will all members of the Gala Committee
- and remember that includes you,
Cissy - please note that there's an
emergency meeting at twelve noon
sharp! I don't use the adjective,
"emergency," lightly. I will start as
the hour strikes.

He totters out on his ivory cane motioning to BOBBY to
follow him. Much chatter.

CISSY

Don't forget to remind me, Reggie-

REGGIE

I'll set the alarm.

As REGGIE sets his watch, OCTAVIA starts to sing. Her voice
is remarkably strong but at one point, she forgets the
words, and substitutes "Dee-dee-dee-dee." She stops,
embarrassed. The other singers remain respectful.

INT. DINING ROOM - MORNING

The residents are eating their breakfasts. Some are being
served coffee. DWAYNE doles out pills to various RESIDENTS.
SHERYL, sits next to OCTAVIA. Two Polish waitresses, MARTA
and EVA, chat in Polish to each other as they clear. They
start to clear the plate of DAPHNE MORGAN who is finishing
her porridge. At her table are TONY ROSE and DAVE.

DAPHNE

Wait, wait!

(takes another two
mouthfuls then pushes
the bowl towards them)

Thank you.

EVA and MARTA, unphased, continue chatting in Polish and move
on to other tables, passing ANNE LANGLEY and then GEORGE,
Chorus. GEORGE is observing an argument going on at a table
next to a window where REGGIE and CISSY are sitting, her
earphones by her side. At the only other table by the window
sits CEDRIC, LETITIA, and BOBBY. CISSY glances out the
window.

It's the chorus vs. the soloists. HARRY is standing
between REGGIE and an empty chair (WILF'S). HARRY makes
a few attempts to move the chair to seat himself, but
REGGIE holds firmly with one hand and one leg, as he
continues to do The Telegraph crossword. The following
argument should be overlapped -

GEORGE

(from the other table)

You can't save seats, Reg!

REGGIE ignores GEORGE, holding fast to the chair with one leg and one hand while he continues to do the crossword.

HARRY
 (trying to pull the
 seat)
 You soloists come in and just sing
 a few arias. We sing the entire
 bloody opera.

REGGIE
 (pulls back)
 You may be on stage the entire
 time, but you're not actually
 singing, you're just standing
 in the back.

HARRY begins to argue back and REGGIE overrides him.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
 (indicates people at
 his table)
 Why now, Harry? We've been
 sitting at this table for as
 long as I've been here.

WILF has entered the dining room, supported by his cane, waving to others as he goes toward his table.

HARRY
 Exactly my point! If this
 place shuts down in six months,
 which it bloody well could -
 (he looks at others
 in the room)
 I want to be able to look back
 and remember I had a fucking
 window seat!

As WILF reaches the table, a few cheers from GEORGE and other chorus residents seated at their tables.

WILF
 Excuse me.

He moves the empty chair over and sits in it with difficulty, holding his cane. HARRY goes back to his table, sits, starts to take his pills.

ANNE LANGLEY
 I could have had a window seat, but
 I much prefer to sit by myself.

CISSY, a bit unnerved, puts her earphones on.

HARRY

You can't deny it, Wilf,
soloists would be nothing
without us.

WILF

If I hear that again, Harry, I
may stick a fork up your
jacksy.

GEORGE

(sitting next to
HARRY)
He's right, Wilf.

WILF

Anybody got a fork?

GEORGE

You know he is-

WILF

Make that two forks.

ANGELIQUE, 20, French, has brought WILF a full English
breakfast. He is getting his usual special treatment from
ANGELIQUE as other plates are getting cleared.

WILF (CONT'D)

Merci, Angelique. Have you done
something new to your hair?

ANGELIQUE

No. It's the same. I just put
fringe in front.

WILF

I love your fringe in front.

REGGIE looks up from his paper.

ANGELIQUE

Extra slice fried bread this
morning and your favourite-
(places jam on his
tray)
- apricot Jam.

REGGIE lowers his paper and looks steelily at ANGELIQUE.

ANGELIQUE (CONT'D)

Dr. Cogan she say too much of
the sugar is bad for you, but I
know you like very much. Same
for Madame Langley.

With a wink, she nods in the direction of ANNE LANGLEY,
who sits at a nearby table eating delicately.

WILF

You're an angel, Angelique. C'est magnifique. Vous fancy a rumpy-pumpy cette soiree, Angelique?

ANGELIQUE

Qu'est que c'est "rumpy pumpy"?

WILF

Angelique, are we getting married or not? I need your answer.

ANGELIQUE

(used to it)

Bon appetit!

She goes. REGGIE lowers his paper, stares at her.

CISSY looks out of the window. CEDRIC, at the next table, leans over and taps her. She removes her earphones and looks at CEDRIC.

CISSY

Ready.

CEDRIC

Cissy, remember, the emergency meeting is at twelve noon. Precisely.

CISSY nods, turns back, puts earphones on.

REGGIE

(turns to CEDRIC)

Cedric, it's breakfast time.

CEDRIC motions towards CISSY's back. He rotates his finger indicating CISSY is unbalanced.

WILF

Cedric! Chill! Hullo or bonjour, look -

He points to the window. DR. COGAN is speaking urgently to TADEK, as they walk past the window. TADEK carries a window squeegee and a cloth. WILF watches them.

EXT. DRIVE, BEECHAM HOUSE - WILF'S POV - DAY

A people carrier is in the driveway. On the side of the vehicle:

BEECHAM HOUSE
HOME FOR RETIRED MUSICIANS

DR. COGAN leaves. TADEK cleans the windows. He gets in the van and starts it.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

All looking out the window.

WILF
(to REGGIE)
Didn't you say today's the day?

CISSY
What's today?

REGGIE
(to CISSY)
Tadek setting off to fetch the
new arrival.

GEORGE
At least now we'll know who it
is.

CISSY
(excited)
What? What? Is there to be a
new arrival?

WILF
Cissy, we've been talking about
it for days.

CISSY
Have I? Have we? Then who is
it? How do you know it's today?

GEORGE
They'd only send the van for a
star.

ANNE LANGLEY
They sent a private car with a
chauffeur for me.

HARRY

When I came I had to pay for my own taxi.

WILF

It's the replacement for poor old Laurence Timms. Dear oh dear, I do miss him.

(they eat)

But I'll tell you this, I never knew a man to fart like Laurence.

REGGIE

Wilf, please.

Concerned that it will offend CISSY, REGGIE looks at her. But to his dismay, CISSY is smiling, enjoying WILF'S story.

WILF

That man could fart at will -

REGGIE

Please, I'm eating my breakfast.

WILF

I'm not making this up Reg. - he would get down on the floor on all fours, go into a meditative state, until his entire body relaxed. At which point he could actually inhale and exhale through his anal canal-

REGGIE

Willlllf!!

CISSY sees NOBBY in the garden. WILF notices CISSY watching NOBBY.

WILF

- and when he exhaled, it came out as a crepitation. That's what he called it. What a gentleman! His record was one hundred and thirty-seven crepitations in a row.

REGGIE

(resigned)

I give up.

WILF
 (to CISSY, teasing)
 Cissy, will I do instead of
 Nobby for a quick one in the
 long grass?

CISSY, continuing to listen to her CD, turns back to her breakfast but her napkin falls from her lap. WILF is about to retrieve it but doesn't, so that CISSY has to lean down, revealing her ample cleavage. WILF observes CISSY'S bosom while putting apricot jam on his toast.

WILF (CONT'D)
 May I tell you, Cissy, in all
 honesty, that you still have
 the most beautiful tits I've
 ever seen?

CISSY finds her napkin, sits up, triumphant, smiling.

WILF (CONT'D)
 (Takes a bite of his
 toast.)
 In fact, your whole body causes
 me to pulsate with lust.

She smiles, blithely, as REGGIE glares at WILF'S toast.

WILF (CONT'D)
 (to REGGIE)
 Pass the apricot jam, old son-

REGGIE controls his irritation. CISSY reaches across and passes the jam to WILF and returns to her CD.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Breakfast over, the residents continue to make their way slowly out of the dining room. The maids continue to clear while NIGEL, on his way out, passes WILF and REGGIE who are getting up from the table.

NIGEL
 For the record Wilf, Cedric was
 right, you were too slow.

WILF
 Stick it where the sun don't shine,
 Nigel.

LETITIA and FELICITY, the pianists, appear at REGGIE'S and WILF'S side. The following is overlapped -

LETITIA
 Do any of you yet know what you
 propose to do for the gala?

WILF

I was thinking of giving my Figaro.

FELICITY

You must let me know in plenty of time.

LETITIA

Felicity dear, I'm the pianist. I'm the one who plays the score. You're the one who turns the pages.

FELICITY and LETITIA walk away.

FELICITY

I'm still a professional and I can't bear it when you're annoyed with me.

CISSY stops at LOTTE'S table.

CISSY

I didn't think you were out of tune at all.

WILF

Anne, what are you going to do for the gala?

ANNE LANGLEY

What?

She continues to eat.

WILF

What are you going to do for the gala?

She spontaneously begins to sing an aria from TOSCA - Vissi D'Arte.

WILF (CONT'D)
 (to REGGIE, sotto voce)
 Sorry I asked.

EXT. LONDON STREET - DAY

The Beecham House van is parked in front of one of the elegant houses on the street. Bottles of milk are being delivered to the house next door. Above, JEAN HORTON, at her flat window, is watching. TADEK and the BUILDING ATTENDANT emerge carrying suitcases and load them into the van. The ATTENDANT stays with the van as TADEK goes back to the house.

OMITTED

INT. JEAN HORTON'S FLAT - DAY

WIDE SHOT on her back, silhouetted, revealing again JEAN HORTON, mid 70s, air of a grande dame, standing alone near a window in her living room, empty of furniture, dust marks where pictures once hung. There are sealed trunks and suitcases on the ground with decals of different countries.

She is smartly dressed but in somewhat dated clothing.

TADEK comes in to collect more suitcases.

JEAN
 Be careful with that one, it's fragile.

TADEK
 I come back for trunk. And for you.

TADEK leaves. JEAN continues to stare out the window.

OMITTED (SCENE MOVED TO 15A/16)

INT/EXT. PEOPLE CARRIER, COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The people carrier making its way along the country road.

TADEK at the wheel. JEAN in a rear seat, lost in forlorn thought. She has been writing on the back of a newspaper. She mouths words softly.

JEAN
 - I apologise - be kind to me
 - we were different then - no,
 no - we were - I can't do this -

TADEK
 (glancing in the rear
 mirror)
 Madam, you say to me something?

JEAN is suddenly overcome with alarm:

JEAN
 Stop! Turn round. Go back -

TADEK
 What? What? You wanna go back?
 No, no, I must call Dr. Cogan -

JEAN
 (confused, in a
 state)
 Don't be such a damn fool,
 drive on!

TADEK
 Madam, what you want? Stop, go,
 what?

INT. STAIRS & MAIN HALL, THE HOME - DAY

WILF, on the chair lift, holding a remote control,
 descends slowly while humming. He sees a dazzling bunch
 of garden flowers being arranged in a vase by DR. COGAN.
 DAPHNE is helping.

WILF
 Never seen you arrange flowers
 before, Dr. Cogan.

DR. COGAN
 Really Wilf, haven't you noticed
 that we've had to cut down on
 staff in the last few months?

WILF
 Is it for a new arrival?
 (No answer, with his
 remote, he pauses the
 chair lift)
 Is that a new skirt? I haven't
 seen it before. It really clings
 to you beautifully. It actually
 accentuates your already
 beautiful legs. Don't you agree,
 Daphne?

DAPHNE, embarrassed, demurs.

DR. COGAN
 (amused)
 You're overstepping the line, Wilf.

WILF
I know.

WILF dismounts the chair lift.

DR. COGAN
Go for your walk, Wilfred.

WILF
I'd love it if you could join me,
Lucy.

DR. COGAN
Go for your walk.

WILF
(passing her)
I must tell you Lucy, it's hard to
leave you.

DR. COGAN
(continues arranging
flowers)
Do your best.

WILF
May I?

WILF picks a flower and tries to put it in his lapel.

WILF (CONT'D)
I can't see it without my glasses.
Would you be so kind?

WILF bends while DR. COGAN goes to fit the flower in his lapel.
Their faces close. He grins at her.

DR. COGAN
You don't have a lapel, Wilf.

WILF
What do you know?

DR. COGAN
Go for your walk, Wilf.

EXT. BEECHAM HOUSE & GROUNDS - DAY

Other residents and their visitors also taking the air,
greeting each other. WILF waves. Some wave back. From a
nearby window, the muffled, intermittent sound of
"Underneath the Arches" accompanied by piano and trumpet.

Four Gilbert and Sullivan singers are playing croquet.

WILF
A pound says I'll kick your arse,
Nigel.

NIGEL
The way you play, I'm sure you will.

EXT. SUMMERHOUSE - DAY

WILF continues to stroll. Faintly we hear the sound of a clarinet coming from the SUMMERHOUSE.

Sitting inside, OLLY FISHER playing "Who is Sylvia." WILF pauses, waves to OLLY.

OLLY then takes a deep breath and another. He takes a pill from his pill box and puts it under his tongue. WILF observes closely. When his breathing is restored, WILF and OLLY exchange a thumbs up.

EXT. FOUNTAIN GARDEN - DAY

NOBBY chatters while overseeing SIMON digging over a bed. WILF strolls toward them from behind.

WILF
(calling to him)
Morning, Nobby.

NOBBY
(calling back)
Morning, Mr. Bond.

WILF
Simon, wassup?

SIMON
All good, mate.

WILF
It's going to be a scorcher.

NOBBY
Global warming.

WILF
Or just an English summer, one of the two. By the way, when you have a chance I could use another of the "usual."

NOBBY refuses money that WILF offers him.

NOBBY
No problem. I still have change from the last time. I'll put it in the "usual" place.

NOBBY nods his head to a place off the premises.

WILF
 (continues to walk)
 And watch out, Nobby, Cissy
 Robson's been looking for you all
 morning. Can't think why, I'm so
 much more attractive.

WILF walks on.

NOBBY
 (calls out)
 Says you.
 (beat, shouts after WILF)
 How's the leg?

WILF
 Which one?

EXT. TERRACE - DAY

On the terrace, tables and chairs under parasols.
 Residents reading, TONY and DAVE are playing a game of
 draughts.

REGGIE sits at a table in a shaded corner, writing,
 preparing his lecture - A BIOGRAPHY OF VERDI and The
 Telegraph are on the table next to him. CISSY, seated
 next to REGGIE, listens to her CD while watching TWO
 LITTLE GIRLS (one of them is ESME) and a BOY playing on
 the grass.

LETITIA, sitting on the other side of the terrace, with
 her DAUGHTER, chat while watching their kids.

WILF approaches, goes to sit next to REGGIE and CISSY.
 REGGIE glances up and continues writing.

WILF
 (as he sits)
 I read somewhere that the
 average man thinks about sex
 every seven seconds.

REGGIE
 (writing)
 And do you?

WILF

(gazing at CISSY as she sits)
I wish it was only every seven
seconds.

REGGIE

You need to see a psychiatrist.

WILF

Male or female?

REGGIE continues to write.

WILF (CONT'D)

(picking up a newspaper on
the table, pulls his glasses
on, looks at the crossword
puzzle)

You left a word out.

(states the clue - and he
gets it, pauses, he studies
CISSY, takes his glasses
off)

When I first saw her, God knows how
long ago, I thought she was the
most beautiful, sexiest thing I'd
ever clapped eyes on.

The alarm on REGGIE'S wristwatch sounds. He is about to tap
CISSY on the arm but WILF stops him with a look.

WILF (CONT'D)

Cissy, let Reg and me have our
way with you now. Go on, be a
sport, on the lawn, legs apart,
bloomers abandoned. I'll remove
my truss.

(taps her on the arm
with his cane, she
removes her headset
and looks at WILF)

How about it?

CISSY

Ready.

WILF loves it. REGGIE is forced to smile.

CISSY (CONT'D)

What are you laughing at?

WILF

Nothing -

CISSY

Why did you interrupt me? Can't you see I'm listening to us?

WILF

To what?

CISSY

Rigoletto. The quartet. We are so lovely -

REGGIE

Were.

(taps his watch)

Cissy, the gala committee.

CISSY

Oh yes, yes -

She rises, in a flurry, starts to go.

REGGIE

(to WILF)

Royal Opera House, Nineteen-Sixty - whatever it was, Covent Garden. Do you remember, Wilf?

WILF

It's the last time the four of us sang it. We had done it, what, fifty times before that?

CISSY comes darting back for her bag.

CISSY

And thank you Reggie. I'm so relieved you're safely back from Karachi.

She starts to hurry away, but momentarily can't remember which way to go. Clutching her bag, leaving the CD cover on the table, but it falls to the ground.

WILF

Why Karachi?

REGGIE

Her father was Indian army.

WILF

Yes, yes, yes, so he was. Do you think she's getting worse?

REGGIE

(quietly)

Yes.

WILF bends down to pick up the CD cover, but ends up sitting on the ground. He looks at the CD cover.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
 (still reading and making notes)
 I'm glad they've reissued it. We might get royalties.

WILF tries vainly to get up.

WILF
 I wish they'd reissue us instead.

REGGIE helps him to his feet.

WILF (CONT'D)
 They might have put our photographs on the cover instead of just our names.

WILF studies the CD cover.

In bold letters against an appropriate background:

CLASSIC RECORDINGS - Jean HORTON sings GILDA with Reginald PAGET, Cecily ROBSON, Wilfred BOND in RIGOLETTO

WILF (CONT'D)
 Dizzy heights, those days.
 (sits)
 'Jean Horton sings Gilda.' I should have had top billing. Name part, after all.
 (looks off)
 I remember the production, the recording sessions, everything, as if it were yesterday yet I can't remember what we had for breakfast this morning-

REGGIE
 (quietly)
 - fucking apricot jam, that's what you had.

WILF
 (looks at CD again)
 Everyone said the quartet had never been better sung. My picture in the Daily Mail with the caption: "Wilfred Bond - A New Star?" Question mark. I was famous for a day. Still, I made a living and that's all I ever wanted. I'm not like you, Reg. You're an artist, I'm an artisan -

REGGIE
Have you listened to it?

WILF
No. Have you?

REGGIE
No, no way, Wilf. No way.

WILF
Of course. Clumsy of me.

These two old friends share a moment. REGGIE writes again.
CISSY returns, panicked.

CISSY
Have you seen my CD case?

WILF hands it to her. She rushes away as SIMON walks by.

WILF
(to SIMON - a rap line
from Tinie Tempah's
"Pass Out")
"I'm born famous
I'm sorta' known"

SIMON
"If your son doesn't"

WILF
"I bet your daughter knows"

WILF and SIMON put their fists in the air. REGGIE makes a
face.

WILF (CONT'D)
Reg, you might as well get used
to it. Rap is here to stay.

REGGIE
Why? Rap is not music.

WILF
It is to them.

INT. MUSIC ROOM/MAIN HALL - DAY

CISSY hurries through the Music Room. The Gilbert and Sullivan troop are rehearsing "Flowers that Bloom in the Spring."

INT. SITTING ROOM - DAY

Seated around a table are BOBBY, ANNE LANGLEY, LETITIA and DAPHNE, who takes the minutes. CEDRIC, in a new caftan, is standing and in full flight, waving The Times under BOBBY's nose pointing at an interview with a photo of FRANK WHITE.

CISSY opens the door quietly and comes in.

CEDRIC

(to the table)

...When this came out last week we were assured of our much needed sell out concert and increased donations. Now it's a bloody disaster. If we can't make the gala into the hottest ticket in town, this house could collapse about our ears. We could lose it. None of us wants to be turfed out into the street with nowhere to go.

(looks up, sees CISSY)

CISSY

(at the door)

I certainly don't want to be turfed out.

CEDRIC

You're late.

CISSY

Apologies.

(nothing from the others; they stare at her)

What? What? I apologise for being late, I'm sorry, I -

CEDRIC

(throws the paper down on the table)

Close the door. Frank White has pulled out. He doesn't feel up for the Gala.

LETITIA

He's not well.

ANNE LANGLEY

Obviously.

CISSY
 (at the closed door)
 And one of our gala highlights. Oh
 dear! Frank White, such a lovely man.

CEDRIC
 (tapping the table
 sharply)
 This is a disaster.

CISSY
 Who was it who said, 'Old age
 is not for sissies'?

CEDRIC
 Next item!

CISSY
 I always remember that because of
 my name, you see, Cissy, sissies -

CEDRIC
 (to CISSY)
 Cissy! If you want to speak, raise
 your hand!
 (picks up a financial
 paper, tosses it to
 BOBBY)
 As of today, pledges from our
 benefactors have fallen by 60%. The
 givers aren't giving. We have to
 find a replacement for Frank,
 urgently.

CISSY raises her hand. From the next room we faintly hear
 "Flowers that bloom in the spring, tra-la" etc.

CEDRIC (CONT'D)
 What?

CISSY
 Bette Davis! She was the one who
 said old age is not-

CEDRIC moves toward CISSY. She stops talking, frightened.
 CEDRIC walks right past her - goes to the door, opens it,
 walks out.

CEDRIC'S VOICE
 SILENZIO!
 (singing continues)
 Shut it!
 (they stop mid way through
 Tra-La-La)
 You will choose a different song
 immediately. I will have no Tra-La-
 La at MY gala!

CEDRIC storms back into the room.

BOBBY
What about Reggie? La Donna è
Mobile?

CEDRIC
Good. Cissy ask him.

CISSY
Reggie is funny about La Donna è
Mobile. I don't think he will.

CEDRIC
Your job is to ask him!

CISSY
Look!

They all turn to look.

EXT. DRIVE, BEECHAM HOUSE - DAY

As DR. COGAN and SIMON wait, the people carrier comes to a halt at the entrance. DR. COGAN helping JEAN to alight. TADEK and SIMON, unload her trunk and many suitcases. In the driveway, a lorry is picking up laundry in sacks. JEAN sees them being loaded.

CISSY'S VOICE
(barely audible)
Heavens above -

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

DR. COGAN escorts JEAN through the front door. They start to walk through the empty large room. She is unhappy, embattled.

JEAN looks up at A LARGE PAINTING of Sir Thomas Beecham.

DR. COGAN
That's Sir Thomas Beecham. One of
Britain's great conductors. The
house is named after him.

JEAN
I know who Sir Thomas Beecham
was, thank you. He inherited a
fortune. His grandfather made
laxatives -so I'm sure naming
this nursing home after him is
frighteningly apt.

DR. COGAN
 (patiently)
 It is not a nursing home. It is
 an exclusive, private retirement
 home.

DR. COGAN opens the second door to the MAIN HALL and
 JEAN limps through it. They pause at the flowers.

DR. COGAN (CONT'D)
 These are to welcome you. I'll
 have them sent up to your room
 later. We're very honoured to
 have you. You have a lovely room.
 Our largest. In what we call the
 "B" Wing -

JEAN
 The "B" Wing? Sounds like prison.

DR. COGAN
 (smiles uncertainly)
 The service lift is being
 repaired -
 (indicates with her
 hand)
 - but you can take the chair
 lift, it'll be easier for you.

JEAN
 (looks at the chair lift
 at the bottom of the
 stairs)
 Take the chair lift? What do I do
 when I get to the top? Ski down?

JEAN follows the rail from the bottom stair to the top.
 From behind, someone begins to clap. Then more join in.
 JEAN turns and looks up. She sees RESIDENTS applauding her
 from the MAIN HALL LANDING. JEAN is at first taken aback
 but then visibly glows, takes a step into the MAIN HALL,
 smiles and nods graciously.

OCTAVIA
 Brava!

OTHER VOICES
 (joining in)
 Brava! Brava!

EXT. CROQUET LAWN - DAY

Close up on a sharp crack, a ball goes through a hoop.
 Not an easy shot. WILF, mallet in one hand, walking
 stick in the other, watches. Their banter is habitual:

REGGIE
 (lining up his next shot,
 turns to WILF)
 What about (names a part in an
 opera)?

Just in time, REGGIE sees WILF'S foot move his own ball
 towards the hoop for an easier shot.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
 (off-hand, not taking his
 eye off his ball)
 You just moved your ball.

WILF
 Me? Unthinkable -

REGGIE
 I saw you -

WILF
 Never-

REGGIE
 I clearly just saw you move it -

WILF has been watching an attractive female visitor walking
 by with her husband.

WILF
 (eyes following the woman)
 Balls!

REGGIE
 Precisely.
 Wilf, she's married.

WILF
 Precisely.
 (he quotes a phrase from an
 Opera in Italian)

They play on and are enthusiastic about the prospect of
 performing.

REGGIE

(lining up his shot)
We could always do "The Barber," you, Cissy, and I, for the Gala. That would draw the crowds.

WILF

Yes, but what I would love to sing again is Macbeth! It's been years, and I miss it.

REGGIE

(aiming)
I always wanted to sing Wagner. Tristan. Just once. But it never came my way. Too many parts, too little time.
(looks at WILF)
Stand back. You're obscuring my line.

WILF

You won't get it through, not from there-

REGGIE

(melodramatic)
Oh yes, I will.

WILF

(melodramatic)
Oh no you won't.

He plays. The ball hits the hoop but doesn't go through.

WILF (CONT'D)

(walks to a nearby tree)
Told you.

REGGIE

You were in the way.

WILF

Was not -

REGGIE

Were!

WILF

(starts to unzip)
Was not!

REGGIE

(looks at WILF behind the tree)
What are you doing now?

WILF

What does it look like I'm
doing now?

(trying to urinate)

Wagner?!! Only bloody
foreigners sing Wagner. We're
best at the British composers.
Rossini, Donizetti, Verdi -

(REGGIE smiles; WILF
looks down)

C'mon! C'mon!

CISSY'S VOICE

Reggie! Wilf!

They turn to see CISSY rushing towards them out of breath
and over-excited.

CISSY

I know who it is, I saw her, I
saw her, George was right, it's
a star, but you'll never,
never, never guess who, never -

WILF

(zipping up)

Then tell us, we don't want to
be kept in suspense for
eternity-

CISSY

You won't believe this. Still
large as life and twice as
terrifying.

(suddenly still)

Oh God! It's gone! Damnation,
what's her name, begins with G.
Soprano, famous -

REGGIE

Famous soprano beginning with
G. Mary Garden -

WILF

Rita Gorr -

REGGIE

Galli-Curci -

CISSY

No, no.

WILF

Cissy, think.

She thinks, brow furrowed.

CISSY
Gilda! Our Gilda!

WILF
Oh! G, Gilda, yes, I see, our
"Gilda," Rigoletto. You mean
Jean Horton-

CISSY
Yes! How clever of you! Yes,
Jean Horton.

WILF
Jean Horton? Here?
(he and CISSY look at
REGGIE)
You all right, old son?

REGGIE is frozen. No response.

CISSY
If it's any consolation, Reg,
she's aged terribly. She looks
a hundred-

Brief, tense silence.

WILF
Steady, Reg, steady, NSP, NSP -

REGGIE walks away.

WILF (CONT'D)
It'll be all right, old son,
trust me -

REGGIE throws down his mallet and marches off towards
the house. WILF and CISSY watch him, deeply concerned.

INT. DR. COGAN'S OFFICE - DAY

DR. COGAN, standing beside a table getting coffee. REGGIE
is standing.

REGGIE
(furious)
...that's why you kept it such a
secret. You didn't want me to know.
It's intolerable. I should have been
consulted, Dr. Cogan. I should have
been warned.

DR. COGAN

Jean Horton was such a big star. She didn't want media attention. Nor did we -

REGGIE

She didn't want? Always, always, always what she wants - nothing changes.

DR. COGAN

(gently)

It had nothing to do with you, Reginald. It was simply at her request.

REGGIE

She did know that I live here?

DR. COGAN

Yes.

REGGIE

She knew.

(Beat)

It's been so calm here. So agreeable.

(DR. COGAN listens sympathetically as REGGIE rails on)

Do you know what I wanted? I wanted a dignified senility. I scrimped and saved - repaired my own clothes, had only one glass of red wine a day. One! My only indulgence was to buy from time to time my favourite cologne. And why? So that I could afford without charity a decent room of my own in this house. And now she's here.

(moving toward the door)

I shall have to find somewhere else to live.

DR. COGAN

Reginald, I'm sure she -

REGGIE

You don't know her!

REGGIE opens the door to leave.

DR. COGAN

Aren't you giving a talk to the school children tomorrow?

REGGIE
 (resigned, as he's
 leaving)
 Dear God -

DR. COGAN
 Your talks are so valuable,
 Reggie. These children have never
 been to an opera -

INT. COMMON ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Close on a television - OTELLO. Three or four RESIDENTS,
 including NORMA, are watching, among them, ANNE LANGLEY.

ANNE LANGLEY
 (gesturing to TV)
 Why can't we find Otello's like
 that today - they don't exist.

NORMA
 Desdemona sounds nice.

ANNE LANGLEY
 That's such an easy part.

They continue their critique of the performances.

A burst of laughter from the other side of the room as WILF
 slaps down a card theatrically.

WILF
 Canasta! I win!

A WOMAN PLAYER
 You cheated!

Reveal at a corner of the room, WILF sits with REGINA,
 violin, LOTTE and MARION.

DR. COGAN enters the room and looks around.

DR. COGAN
 Wilf, have you seen Reginald?

WILF
 He turned in early. But he's fine.
 Tough as a monkey's tit, is Reggie.

DR. COGAN
 (turns toward the terrace)
 Who's smoking?

WILF
 I suspect it's George and Harry.

The French doors are open, through which the backs of GEORGE and HARRY can be seen.

DR. COGAN

I don't know how many times I've told them, smoking kills!

WILF

For god's sake, doc, leave 'em be. George is seventy-six and Harry's nearly eighty. What the hell's it matter?

DR. COGAN

(smiles)

You're a bad influence, Wilfred.

DR. COGAN shakes her head, turns and walks away as WILF watches her.

WILF

Give us a wiggle-
(DR. COGAN continues walking)
Do that again.

DR. COGAN

I didn't give you the first one.

WILF

If I live another five years, I'll have her. I just need time.

INT. JEAN'S ROOM - MAGIC HOUR

JEAN, with difficulty, puts a record player next to the flowers on a table. She takes the cord in hand, looking for an outlet.

INT. MAIN HALL LANDING - MAGIC HOUR

Dim light. DR. COGAN comes along the corridor, sees a light under a door, knocks gently and opens the door.

INT. JEAN'S ROOM - MAGIC HOUR

JEAN is kneeling, trying to fit the plug of the record player into a socket on the skirting board. She puts on her glasses. In the suitcase beside her, a pile of LPs - we barely make out the titles - JEAN HORTON'S GREATEST ARIAS and THE BEST OF JEAN HORTON, others.

She hears the knock, hurriedly closes the suitcase, takes off her glasses, tries to rise, but can't. She winces in pain as DR COGAN looks in.

DR. COGAN
(a little alarmed,
hesitant to help)
Are you all right?
(MORE)

DR. COGAN (CONT'D)
 (a withering stare from
 JEAN; gently)
 Isn't this room lovely?

JEAN
 The bed takes up half the room.

DR. COGAN
 You've had a long day. You might
 want to retire early.

JEAN
 I have not yet entered second
 childhood so please don't talk
 to me as though I have. Just
 leave me be. And I will take my
 meals in my room.

A brief pause.

DR. COGAN
 We don't usually serve the
 residents in their rooms.

JEAN
 You do, I presume, when the
 resident is not feeling well. I'm
 not feeling well.

DR COGAN hesitates, uncertain as whether or not to offer
 JEAN a helping hand. She decides against it.

DR. COGAN
 I hope you feel better soon.

DR. COGAN turns and walks out. JEAN struggles to get up
 and finally sits by the window, exhausted.

INT. MAIN HALL LANDING - MAGIC HOUR

DR. COGAN comes to a door. No light showing. On the
 door, a small brass plaque of the type used on dressing
 room doors with the name:

REGINALD PAGET

She wants to knock but hesitates, decides against it and
 continues on her way.

EXT. REGGIE'S ROOM - MAGIC HOUR

REGGIE, a silhouette, stands on the terrace of his room,
 gazing at a lighted window in the "B" Wing. He can just make
 out JEAN seated in a chair.

From REGGIE, we move on to LEO playing "The Swan" on his cello in his room.

OMITTED

INT. MUSIC ROOM - MORNING

The Gilbert and Sullivan troop are rehearsing "So Please You, Sir, We Much Regret" with FELICITY at the piano. One of the four turns the page of the score too soon. FELICITY is irritated. Through the window we see NOBBY deadheading roses while SIMON rakes.

EXT./INT. WILF'S WINDOW & ROOM - MORNING

The music continues over the following scenes.

Above the COMMON ROOM, where the four Gilbert and Sullivan singers are rehearsing, the window is flung open and WILF stands greeting the morning air. He goes from breathing deeply to vocalising.

CISSY'S VOICE

Yoo-hoo!

He sees CISSY leaning out her window. He follows her gaze down towards NOBBY and SIMON.

NOBBY looks up to see CISSY at her window, gazing down at him, leaning forward, allowing her cleavage to show. She waves alluringly just as WILF'S VOICE, doing scales, competes with the Gilbert and Sullivan singers.

NOBBY takes a break from the roses. He removes his shirt and wipes his forehead as he flexes, exciting CISSY.

OMITTED

INT. JEAN'S ROOM - MORNING

JEAN, asleep in the chair by the window, an LP jacket sitting in her lap. She is woken with a start by the cacophony of singing and vocalising. Warily, she raises her eyes to heaven.

EXT. WILF'S WINDOW

Looking down, WILF sees CISSY, a robe over her bathing suit, being coquettish with NOBBY and SIMON on her way to the swimming pool building.

CISSY

Those roses are so beautiful.
What are they called, Nobby?

NOBBY

They're Elizabeth of Glamis, Miss
Robson, named after the late
Queen Mother. And those are
Iceberg.

CISSY

Named after Jean Horton, I
suppose.

She knows she's made a joke. She puts a finger to her lips
and runs off. NOBBY smiles.

WILF

(calling to NOBBY)
Nobby - 1. Wilf - Nil!

INT. DINING ROOM, BREAKFAST - MORNING

Close on Newspapers being dropped on tables or chairs as
RESIDENTS eat. They vary, depending on the preference of the
reader. WILF and LEO at their table. The seat next to WILF
(REGGIE'S) is empty. WILF and SIMON exchange nods as SIMON
drops The Telegraph on the seat. His Full English breakfast,
hardly touched. WILF takes the paper and finds the sports
page.

GEORGE

(with HARRY, at their
table)
Is Reggie coming or not? This
really is very unfair.

WILF

It's all yours, boys -

As WILF leaves, GEORGE immediately starts to move their
plates as CEDRIC smirks at his table.

INT. MAIN HALL LANDING - MORNING

WILF taps lightly on REGGIE'S door. No answer. He cracks
the door open, looks and walks in. He sees no one there.

WILF leaves and closes the door. Walks away.

OMITTED

INT. STAIRCASE HALL/Common Room/Fitness Room - Morning

WILF descends the staircase. He enters the COMMON ROOM where DAVE is playing BACH'S FUGUE IN D MINOR on the piano. WILF walks to the FITNESS ROOM, opens the door, CEDRIC is having his nails done.

CEDRIC

Excuse me, this room is occupied!

WILF

(as he closes the door)

Don't do your toes the same color, Cedric, it's considered gauche.

WILF (CONT'D)

Good Morning, Dr. C. Have you seen Reggie?

DR. COGAN

Yes, he asked if he could use the computer. He's in my office.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - OUTSIDE DR. COGAN'S OFFICE - Morning

WILF knocks and opens the door. He sees REGGIE inside at the computer.

INT. DR. COGAN'S OFFICE - Morning

WILF

Reggie. You okay?

REGGIE

I don't wish to be disturbed. I'm working.

WILF

Can I get you a cup of cof--

REGGIE

I'm preparing my talk. Please close the door when you leave.

WILF looks at REGGIE then walks out, closing the door.

ON THE COMPUTER SCREEN: Rap information.

INT. JEAN'S ROOM - Day

On a table, a tray with half a glass of juice. JEAN is holding a cup of coffee while laying out her clothes for the day. Most of the suitcases remain unopened.

Disconcerted, she drops a garment back into an opened portmanteau. JEAN moves to the dressing-table, sits, gazing at herself in the mirror. She holds up different pieces of jewelry. A knock on the door.

JEAN

Who?

CISSY'S VOICE

A friend.

JEAN

(suspicious)

Come.

CISSY enters. JEAN stares at her blankly.

CISSY

(as to a child)

It's me, Jean. Cissy. Cicely Robson.

JEAN

Why does everybody here treat me like a half-wit?

(goes back to
brushing her hair;
off-hand)

I know who you are. Where's Reggie?

CISSY

It's lovely to see you here, Jean. I've been telling everyone, you still look like a young girl -

JEAN

(checks her profile in
the mirror)

I don't feel it. I'm very slow. I'm on a waiting-list for a new hip.

CISSY

You have such beautiful jewelry.

JEAN starts to put a necklace on.

CISSY (CONT'D)

Oh, do let me, Jean. You remember how you used to like me to give your make-up the once over before you went on?

(clips the necklace,
and picks out a pair
of earrings)

(MORE)

CISSY (CONT'D)
 We'll have you looking as you
 always did, youthful and
 whining -
 (corrects herself
 quickly)
 Shining. Youthful and shining -

In the mirror JEAN watches CISSY.

 JEAN
 (a trace of an
 affectionate smile)
 You certainly haven't changed.
 I asked you where Reggie is.

JEAN, through the window, sees a COACH pulling up. School children start to get out.

 JEAN (CONT'D)
 Who are those children?

 CISSY
 (looking)
 Oh, Reggie must be giving one of
 his talks today.
 (noticing the tray with
 orange juice)
 Did they serve you breakfast in
 your room?

 JEAN
 Of course they did.

INT. MAIN HALL LANDING/STAIRCASE/STAIRCASE HALL - DAY

CISSY and JEAN walk from JEAN'S ROOM.

 CISSY
 ...what with people being sent away
 if they're too ill or go completely
 doolally, of course one gets
 depressed from time to time - I
 mean, I've woken up with the black
 dog on my shoulder a couple of
 times - but it never lasts for
 long. How could it? You'll see, we
 all look after each other and
 that's very cheering -

JEAN and CISSY walk on.

JEAN and CISSY are near the bottom of the stairs. BOBBY, in the background, waits.

 CISSY (CONT'D)
 ...there's so much to enjoy
 here. People coming and going -

BOBBY
 (hissing)
 Cissy!

CISSY
 (continuing)
 - new faces, old friends,
 families with their children,
 new interests -

From behind a door the sound of salsa music.

JEAN
 What's that awful noise?

CISSY
 Oh, I'm in this class.

CISSY opens the double doors.

INT. COMMON ROOM - DAY

SHERYL, is teaching salsa to a group of residents who try to follow her movements.

SHERYL
 Cissy! You're missing class,
 come on in.

CISSY
 (game as ever)
 Oh, shall we, Jean?

JEAN
 (to herself)
 This is not a retirement home, this
 is a madhouse.

CISSY goes in and does some steps. JEAN gives her a withering look and starts to walk on. CISSY starts out after her as BOBBY intercepts her, handing her a note.

INT. STAIRCASE HALL/MAIN HALL - DAY

BOBBY
 (hissing)
 Birthday Benefit Gala.
 Emergency. Top secret.

He scuttles off. CISSY puts on glasses, reads the note as she catches up with JEAN.

JEAN
 Didn't that used to be Bobby
 Swanson?

CISSY
 (puzzled by the note)
 Yes -

 JEAN
 He didn't seem to recognise me.
 How odd.

 CISSY
 His sight isn't what it was.

CISSY and JEAN walk on.

 JEAN
 Such an intense little man. He
 always looks as though he's
 spying for a foreign power.
 What does the note say?

 CISSY
 Birthday Benefit Gala. Emergency.
 Top Secret.

 JEAN
 Birthday benefit gala? Whose
 birthday? Mine isn't until the
 6th of January?

 CISSY
 (re-reading the note,
 puzzled)
 No, no, not yours, Jean,
 Giuseppe Verdi's. There's a
 Benefit Gala. Everyone's
 expected to perform to save our
 Beecham House-

 JEAN
 What do you mean, perform?

INT. SMALL MUSIC ROOM - DAY

They walk toward the SMALL MUSIC ROOM.

 CISSY
 We have to do what we do, Jean.

 JEAN
 At our age? Ridiculous!

 CISSY
 Everyone does something.

 JEAN
 I won't sing at Verdi's gala or
 anyone else's. And that's final.

 CISSY
 I was listening to our Rigoletto this
 morning. We were all so good,
 especially your Gilda.

JEAN
 (taking the compliment)
 I never got less than twelve curtain
 calls.
 (looking at the note)
 What's the emergency?

CISSY
 (shows JEAN the note)
 I don't know. He's written 'No
 one'. What can it mean?

JEAN
 Please, I want to find Reggie.

They enter the SMALL MUSIC ROOM.

CISSY
 He's right here.
 (starts for the door)

JEAN
 (panics, whispers)
 No - Wait. Cissy. No!

INT./EXT. MUSIC ROOM/SMALL MUSIC ROOM - DAY

We are on the faces of the school children. They have been asked a question by REGGIE, and are shy, or reluctant to answer. They are from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Some surreptitiously fiddle with their mobile phones.

REGGIE stands before them. A nearby upright piano against the wall. In the back we see DR. COGAN sitting with OCTAVIA in her wheelchair.

REGGIE
 Come on, don't be shy -

Eventually, A GIRL puts her hand up.

THE GIRL
 Lady Gaga -

REGGIE
 Lady Gaga, sounds like someone I
 know -

From the group, A MALE TEENAGER, hip-hop-ish, JOEY, looking at his mobile phone -

REGGIE (CONT'D)
 So what about you?

JOEY
 (puts his phone away, not
 making eye contact)
 (MORE)

JOEY (CONT'D)
 Lady Gaga is pop, we like hip-hop, period.

REGGIE
 Is hip hop like rap?

JOEY'S FRIEND
 Kinda man, but it's different.

REGGIE
 (looking at JOEY)
 Help me out here, tell me what's rap?

At the door, in the SMALL MUSIC ROOM, CISSY starts to open it. JEAN, consternated, holds her back.

JEAN
 (whispering)
 Wait. Don't. Wait, wait.

CISSY has already cracked the door open a bit. Out of sight - they listen. JEAN doesn't know whether to stay or leave.

JOEY'S FRIEND
 Show him!

SCHOOL CHILDREN start to laugh.

SCHOOL PUPIL
 Spit it!

JOEY'S FRIEND
 Drop a verse, man.

JOEY
 (looking off)
 Raps from the street while you're in class, so all you teachers can kiss my ass -

SCHOOL CHILDREN laugh.

REGGIE
 Go on! Continue!

JOEY
 Continue what?

REGGIE
 What you're feeling.

Now, they share a look - his friends push him to stand up.

JOEY
 (busts out)
 What you wanna know?
 'bout how I grow to be a bad 'ting?
 (MORE)

JOEY (CONT'D)

Or the way that my brain sings
 When I think of my birth
 What you wanna know?
 You wanna know hate crime?
 Or life rhymes?
 Or the way that the po-po
 Makes my heart go
 When their jake tops wail by?
 (mimes a siren)
 Ne-nah ne-nah ne-nah
 (class laughs, JOEY is
 getting into this)
 What you wanna know?
 You wanna know how life down my
 endz
 Means we aint no politicians friend
 We're the excuse, we're the left-
 outs, we're the done
 What you wanna know?

Pause as they eye each other.

REGGIE

What does "po-po" mean?

JOEY

Cops.

REGGIE

And jake tops?

JOEY

Cops.

REGGIE

Anybody else?

JOEY'S FRIEND

(suddenly free-styles)

REGGIE

That's opera! Originally people just
 like yourselves went to see Opera. But
 then the rich came along and made it
 something that it's not. So what is it
 then? Someone said, 'Opera is when a
 guy is stabbed in the back and while
 he's bleeding, he sings.'

(some school children
 laugh;)

Rap is when a guy gets stabbed
 in the back and while he's
 bleeding, he talks -
 rhythmically and emotionally,
 but because rap is spoken the
 emotion is held in check. It's
 on one note.

(MORE)

REGGIE (CONT'D)

'Why should we listen to some old fart, giving us shit about his art.' In Opera, however, we sing our feelings to the rise and fall of the music. The song sets our emotions free. OPERA THEN, IS AN OUTPOURING OF ALL THE EMOTIONS THAT ALL OF US CARRY INSIDE. And...it's performed by athletes! Oh yes!

(he points to three kids)

Can you stand up? You three - you're fit young men. Football players?

They nod.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Well, we have athletes here as well. Let me introduce you to the wonderful Octavia. She'll be joining us for this next part.

(points to the rappers)

You gentlemen, stand up, pick a note, sing it, and hold it for as long as you can and as loudly as you can. Octavia, will do the same. Ready? One..two..three..Go!

The three school children and OCTAVIA sing their notes. The boys peter out at around ten seconds. OCTAVIA keeps going on and on. When she finally stops -

OCTAVIA

(smiles)

I'm seventy-nine. What's your excuse? When I was your age, I had the highest recorded C note.

THE SCHOOL CHILDREN laugh and applaud.

REGGIE

What you've witnessed is the strength and athleticism of an Opera singer. The people who live here have the superhuman effort it takes to deliver the goods, to breathe, yes, to hold a note -

(gestures to OCTAVIA)

- like the one Octavia just sang -

(distracted by the door

opening a crack;

irritated)

Who is that?

CISSY widens the door to include her and JEAN. Smiles.

CISSY

It's us!

As some kids turn to the door, REGGIE sees JEAN, bridles, and looks away.

REGGIE

The heroines, sopranos - those are the ladies with the highest voices - they sing a repetitive theme that's in all opera. Infidelity. Infidelity. Infidelity. As the Duke sings in Rigoletto -

REGGIE looks again at the door. It's empty. He stares at it.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

(disconcerted)

'La donna è mobile qual plumo al vento'. Women are as fickle as a feather in the wind.'

EXT. TERRACE - DAY

WILF is playing draughts with GEORGE, while HARRY watches. WILF sees REGGIE on the lawn walk by.

WILF

Reggie?

(REGGIE doesn't answer)

Reggie? How did the talk go?

REGGIE keeps walking. WILF watches him and then rises.

EXT./INT. GALA STORAGE/GREENHOUSE - DAY

WILF walks in, goes to a costume and takes out a bottle of Whiskey from a pocket. From another pocket, he takes out two plastic cups.

EXT. GALA STORAGE/GREENHOUSE - DAY

WILF walks over a bridge towards the woods.

EXT. SUMMERHOUSE - DAY

REGGIE, alone, staring out into the landscape, observing a deer.

WILF'S VOICE

(whispering)

'Tis I.

REGGIE half turns as WILF joins him.

WILF
 (admiring the deer)
 That's a beauty.

REGGIE
 I don't want to talk.

WILF
 Of course not.

REGGIE
 I really can do without this at
 my time of life.

WILF
 (pause)
 Do you want me to go?

REGGIE
 (quietly)
 No.

WILF produces the whiskey and two plastic cups.

WILF
 (a ritual)
 Shall we?

REGGIE observes, but says nothing.

EXT. GARDEN & HOUSE - DAY

JEAN and CISSY are strolling. Now and then CISSY steals
 a glance at JEAN, monitoring her sadness.

CISSY
 Don't worry darling, I know where
 the boys are.

They walk.

CISSY (CONT'D)
 Shall we sit for a moment?
 (gestures to a bench by the
 rose bed; they sit, she
 looks around)

A few residents with visitors, among them OLLY slowly
 bouncing his GRANDDAUGHTER, DAISY, on his shoulders. JEAN and
 CISSY catch the tail end of OLLY'S pony-ride. OLLY begins to
 put her down.

DAISY
 No Grandpa! One more!

OLLY struggles to put her back on his shoulders.

CISSY
Oh, look, there's Olly with his
grandchildren.
 (calling)
Daisy, sweetheart!

OLLY gently puts DAISY on the ground, who runs over and
gives CISSY a big hug.

CISSY (CONT'D)

Which hand?

CISSY has taken a sweet from her pocket and holds her hands behind her back. DAISY chooses a hand and CISSY gives her the treat. The parents of the child wave to CISSY and then beckon to DAISY, who runs back.

DAISY

Bye-bye, Cissy -

CISSY smiles and waves.

CISSY

How lovely it is to have visitors, like family. Will you have visitors, Jean?

No response.

JEAN

(trying to get out of her funk)

At least the garden is a joy.

CISSY

(eyes and attention on NOBBY, who is now walking nearby)

Yes, and the woods are lovely too. You know Jean, for someone like me, who never married, never had children, whose nearest and dearest are long departed, this place is a God-send, a blessing, like a fairground ablaze with fairy lights -

(lost for a moment; then)

The bluebells were quite glorious this year. But they're finished now.

JEAN

Like us.

CISSY

And you should have seen the polyanthus and forget-me-nots. I don't expect you get them in Karachi.

JEAN flicks her a sideways glance, as CISSY puts a sweet in her mouth. She offers one to JEAN.

CISSY (CONT'D)

The yellow ones are my favourite.

EXT. SUMMERHOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

REGGIE and WILF are sitting inside holding plastic cups containing whiskey. They have been drinking for awhile. REGGIE is in the process of refilling his.

WILF

So, come on, old son, break into song.

REGGIE smiles. He's been talking about aging.

REGGIE

...and in that way, we're not the same. I'm not like you, Wilf. I positively liked getting old. Physical decay has seemed natural and inescapable. I think I can say I've welcomed the inevitable cheerfully. I've made the transition from opera star to old fart with aplomb
(beat)
Then Jean arrives...

WILF

I remember thinking when you two got married...she was much more ambitious than you-

REGGIE

Of course she was. She was more ambitious than all of us.

WILF

-if I know anything about it.

REGGIE

What can you know about it?

WILF

I was your best man, Reggie.

REGGIE

Yes, and then you were married to the same woman for thirty thousand years. Call me old fashioned but did she know how often you were unfaithful to her?

WILF

You say some very harsh things, Reg.

(gets up, a little unsteady.)

I think I'll have myself a widdle.

(looks around for the right tree, a little tipsy)

You're right, Reg. I hate growing old. Hate every bloody moment of it. If it's not your prostate, it's piles. And then it's peeing five times a night. If you're lucky.

WILF steps off the Summer House and stumbles to a nearby tree. He unzips and begins to pee when he catches a glimpse of CISSY and JEAN walking nearby and sees that they have spotted him.

WILF (CONT'D)

(shouts as he is peeing)

You may want to avert your gaze, ladies. This may take a while. A wise man goes when he can, girls. A fool goes when he must.

He looks up to see REGGIE still in the Summer House, standing at the edge, wanting to flee.

WILF (CONT'D)

Easy, Reg, easy-

By this time, CISSY and JEAN are near enough for JEAN to see REGGIE as he indelicately climbs down from the Summer House, takes a few steps, his back to them.

CISSY
 (as they approach)
 Look! Here's Jean in all her
 glory.

JEAN
 Yes, yes, I know. How are the
 mighty fallen.

WILF
 (glances at REGGIE as he
 goes to kiss JEAN on
 both cheeks)
 Tactless as ever. You haven't
 changed a jot.

CISSY
 (admiring JEAN)
 Didn't I say so? Didn't I say
 she still looks like a young
 girl?

JEAN takes a step towards REGGIE.

JEAN
 Reggie, don't I get a kiss?
 (he keeps his back to
 her)
 Reg?
 (takes a step closer)
 I apologise for hurting you.
 Please be kind to me. We were
 different people then. There.
 I've rehearsed saying that for
 the past week.

Brief silence. He registers what she's saying, looks
 away.

WILF
 He's upset because he wasn't
 warned that you were coming.

REGGIE
 I'm not upset -

He starts to walk.

JEAN
 Reg. It's the first time we've
 seen each other in God knows how
 many years.

REGGIE
 Ninety-seven.

CISSY

Has it been as long as that? How time flies.

(thinks a second)

Oh, you're joking.

WILF

What's wrong with Bobby?

He nods towards the garden.

EXT. GARDEN - POV FROM TERRACE - LATE AFTERNOON

BOBBY, a little distance off, stands gesticulating. He taps his watch, makes imploring gestures, taps his watch again, beckons.

Now, exasperated, he takes a few steps as if walking away, then returns, a little closer now, and starts gesticulating all over again.

WILF'S VOICE

I think he's trying to tell us something.

(calling)

Bobby, give us a clue, for God's sake. Film, book or play?

BOBBY

Cissy!

All their eyes on BOBBY.

WILF

It's for you, Cissy.

BOBBY

(a shouted whisper)

The note!

CISSY

(calling)

I couldn't read your handwriting!

BOBBY

Meeting! Now!

CISSY

(remembering)

Oh yes, the emergency -

She hurries off towards BOBBY.

WILF

I wonder what that's all about.

JEAN looks round and doesn't see REGGIE.

JEAN
Where's Reg?

WILF
(looks down the path)
There he is.

JEAN
(starts down the
path, calls out)
Reg! Why does he treat me like
this? It's not fair. As if I
haven't suffered enough.

WILF
(calling out to her)
NSP, Jean, NSP.

JEAN
(turns her head)
And what, for God's sake, does
that mean?

WILF
It's one of our rules. In fact,
it's our motto. NSP. No Self
Pity.

She turns and walks towards REGGIE.

EXT. PATH WITH A VIEW - LATE AFTERNOON

REGGIE walking.

EXT. PATH WITH A VIEW - LATE AFTERNOON

Walking towards the Church, carrying their instruments, a procession of the string quartet, BILL, 1st violin, REGINA, 2nd violin, FRED, viola, and LEO, cello. We can't make out the words, but there seems to be a disagreement between them. SIMON and ANGELIQUE carry music stands.

JEAN making her way down the path, looking this way and that. The sound of the first movement, Allegro con spirito, of Haydn's 'Sunrise' Quartet begins as she passes.

EXT. WOODLAND, NEAR CHURCH - LATE AFTERNOON

The music faintly behind her, JEAN pauses, peers about. At the end of the path, is a church. JEAN takes a few steps towards it, looks more closely and sees the door is ajar.

INT. CHURCH - LATE AFTERNOON

She looks inside, goes in, looking about. At the other end, she sees REGGIE silhouetted behind a lattice screen.

JEAN
Reggie? May I join you?

REGGIE
(vehement)
No, you may not.

JEAN
I've walked miles to find you,
Reggie.

REGGIE
Just leave me in peace, Jean -

JEAN
I just want to -

She starts to advance.

REGGIE
For Christ's sake, just leave me
in peace! Leave! Leave!

JEAN
(shocked)
Reggie!

REGGIE
I said leave!

Emotional, about to leave, doesn't. She sits at the edge of a pew. From afar, the strains of the Haydn quartet.

REGGIE finally walks over to her, stands a short distance away. After a long pause, he relents, and hands her a spotless white handkerchief. She dabs at her eyes and nose.

JEAN
(smelling the
handkerchief)
Pino Silvestre. I didn't know
you could still buy it.
(dabs her nose, then
aware of him gazing at
her)
What?

REGGIE
I can't ever remember you crying.

JEAN
I didn't know you'd become
religious.

REGGIE

I haven't. I was simply trying to avoid you.

JEAN

(handkerchief to her nose)
My mother taught me never to let others see I was hurt.

REGGIE

Your mother knew all about hiding her feelings. It was easy for her. She didn't have any.

JEAN

Don't be unkind about her.

REGGIE

I liked your father. When he heard that you'd left me, he telephoned and said, 'Sorry, old chap, but count your blessings. I'm still married to her mother.'

REGGIE moves towards the door. Brief pause.

JEAN

I apologise for hurting you. Please be kind to me. We were different people then. There. I've been rehearsing saying that for the past week.

REGGIE

(close to the door)
You've said it before. You're repeating yourself.

JEAN

(thinks)
Oh God.
(brief silence)
Why do we have to grow old?

REGGIE

Because that's what people do.

A brief silence.

JEAN

What I did was unforgiveable - but I was young and foolish.
(he nods, moves closer to the door)
Reggie, we have to come to some arrangement.
(MORE)

JEAN (CONT'D)

We can't keep avoiding each other
or, worse, bickering like
children every time we meet -

REGGIE

(at door, interrupting)
Jean, I don't want to talk about
it. I don't want to re-live
ancient history. You're here. I'm
here. Trapped. That's all there
is to it.

Silence but for the distant music.

JEAN

What are we going to do?

He broods for a moment. Then:

REGGIE

There's always the cliché button.
The one that says, 'Grin and bear
it.'

JEAN

How about trying the one that
says 'forgive and forget' - ?
(REGGIE shakes his head;
she again smells the
handkerchief)
The same cologne. The smell takes
me back.
(looks away)
It takes me back to you, Reg -

Though trying not to, REGGIE looks at her.

EXT./INT. GALA STORAGE/GREENHOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

WILF walks into the greenhouse, is about to put the
bottle and cups back into their hiding place. Stops and
sees DR. COGAN between costumes, on the far side of the
greenhouse, sitting and smoking. She turns. They look at
each other. Overlap GEORGE and HARRY singing "Underneath
the Arches."

INT. COMMON ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

The Gala committee, CEDRIC, BOBBY, ANNE LANGLEY and LETITIA
seated round the table as CISSY, flustered, enters. CEDRIC
puts a hand up to hold her off. GEORGE and HARRY doing
Flanagan & Allen's "Underneath the Arches" with DAVE on
piano. RESIDENTS are seated at various places in the room.

GEORGE and HARRY continue until CEDRIC puts his hand up again
and stops them from completing their song.

CEDRIC
I've changed my mind. I don't think
it's sophisticated enough for the
gala.

GEORGE
We've been at it for a month.

HARRY
What do you mean, it's not
sophisticated enough?

CEDRIC
Exactly what I say.

GEORGE and HARRY start to leave, GEORGE turns -

GEORGE
Sorry, Cedric. I just want to be
clear on one thing. You once said
you sang the title roll in Julius
Caesar at Covent Garden.

HARRY
We can't find any record of it.

CEDRIC
(flustered)
I didn't say I sang Giulio CH-
sare, I said I was considered for
it.

A giggle or two from eavesdropping residents seated in the
music room.

HARRY
Right. Well you've considered us
and, unlike you, we're singing it.

GEORGE
Yeah, we're singing it.

GEORGE and HARRY leave.

NIGEL, baritone, belts out a brief phrase or two from Julius
Caesar. The title role. He finishes.

NIGEL
Giulio CH-sare. Act 1, Scene 2.

CEDRIC, trying to save face, looks at CISSY.

CEDRIC
(looks sharply at CISSY)
Yes, what is it?

CISSY
What happened?

CEDRIC
We started a half-hour ago. You're late.

CISSY
(cheerfully)
Well, here I am.

LETITIA raises her eyes to heaven.

CISSY (CONT'D)
(to LETITIA)
What are you looking at?

CEDRIC
What are you talking about?

CISSY
I thought she saw something. I was afraid we were leaking again.

CEDRIC
Have you asked Reggie to sing La donna é mobile at the gala?

CISSY
Oh God, I forgot!

CEDRIC
Good. Don't. For once, your forgetting, has paid dividends. I have a brilliant idea.

OMITTED

OMITTED

OMITTED

OMITTED

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

CISSY enters a cooking class in progress -

To Be Scripted

EXT. TERRACE - AFTERNOON - SUNNY

At a table on the small terrace, a RESIDENT, (Real Name: CATHERINE WILSON) is surrounded by family with a lit cake, softly singing "Happy Birthday." She opens a present - it's a young photo of her in her prime, surrounded by a frame that the little girl has painted.

INT. SMALL MUSIC ROOM - DAY

ESME at the piano, being taught by her Grandmother, LETITIA. Others in the room watch.

INT. COMMON ROOM

Amateur Night at Beecham House. TWO YOUNG GIRLS on violins, their parents watch and clap. Their performance is followed by ESME continuing Haydn's "Military Minuet" embellished by OLLY on clarinet.

INT. COMMON ROOM - AFTERNOON

LETITIA is sitting at the piano tinkling at "O Sole Mio." CATHERINE WILSON begins to sing, mid-phrase. As she's singing NIGEL joins in - his booming voice startling the other RESIDENTS.

They continue the song together.

INT. COMMON ROOM

GEORGE and HARRY singing "Are You Havin' Any Fun?"

INT. COMMON ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

DAVE, at the piano, playing DeBussy's "Girl with the Flaxen Hair." ANGELIQUE, cleaning. RESIDENTS seated around the room listening. Among them, TONY, who takes his trumpet out of its case, putting in a mute. He approaches the piano and begins to accompany DAVE. The classical song turns into a jazz riff.

ANGELIQUE runs out of the COMMON ROOM - brings back with her, DR. COGAN. They greatly enjoy this special event.

EXT. TERRACE - DAY

REGGIE, reading Rilke's "Letters to a Young Poet," looks up and sees JEAN standing above him.

JEAN
(smiles at REGGIE)
Would you like to go for a walk?

EXT. MUSIC ROTUNDA - EARLY AFTERNOON

On the backs of REGGIE and JEAN sitting on a bench. They appear to be watching the string quartet rehearsing the Menuetto in patterns of sun and shadow. A summer idyll.

Angle, from the front, JEAN is actually contemplating the answer to a question REGGIE has asked.

JEAN
... No, I was only married twice after you and I annulled. First was Charles Tripper. Charles and I lasted four years, although we were rarely together.
(MORE)

JEAN (CONT'D)

He was a business man who mixed business with pleasure one too many times. And then five years after that, I married Edward Fitzroy. He wanted me to retire and have children - so that was that.

(beat)

You never married ... again?

REGGIE

No, I didn't want to anymore.

JEAN

When I signed on to do Romeo and Juliet in 1972, I heard you backed out. Was that because of me?

REGGIE

Yes.

JEAN

And when I played Aida, did you renege on the role of Radames once I joined?

REGGIE

Yes.

JEAN

And then were you to play the Prince in Rusalka until you heard...

REGGIE

Yes.

JEAN

Why did you come here?

REGGIE

My darling George died.

JEAN

George?

REGGIE

My dog - all of a sudden I felt lonely.

The STRING QUARTET stops playing and a spat develops between them. JEAN and REGGIE watch, amused.

JEAN

Would you say it's time we resume our walk?

They both rise.

EXT. AVENUE OF TREES - DAY

REGGIE and JEAN, walking.

JEAN

...but I had no choice but to come here. I have very little - the truth is -

(hesitates)

I have - financial problems. All I have now are my clothes and jewelry.

(nothing from REGGIE)

- and I didn't confide in anyone because I just didn't want any fuss. Quite frankly, I was embarrassed. You know what the media are like. They were always beastly to me and if they learned I'd ended up here, they'd gloat.

REGGIE

(a little acid)

Really? I'm surprised the media still has any interest in you.

JEAN

Oh, do piss off, Reggie, there's a dear. As a matter of fact, and this will obviously surprise you more, I continue to cut a figure. The other night, I was Sir George's guest at Covent Garden. When I entered the box I received an ovation.

REGGIE

(zings her)

And now you're here - scary.

JEAN gives REGGIE an elbow.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Ow.

JEAN

(they walk, zings back)

What do you do when you're not giving your little "talks?"

REGGIE

If I need to tire myself, I think about art. And if I need to exhaust myself, I think about life. But art -

He suddenly breaks off, catching sight of someone through the trees. He turns vicious, hissing.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Bitch!

(JEAN is alarmed)

See her? See her, there she goes,

Angelique, see her? See her?

(not shouting, but loud)

Bitch, cow, sodding frog!

ANGELIQUE, oblivious, some distance off, wanders on through the trees, in and out of dappled light, towards the glade.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

She won't give me marmalade at breakfast. She gives me apricot jam.

JEAN

You hate apricot jam.

REGGIE

But Wilf loves it, she does it deliberately.

(a little louder)

Bitch! Cow! Skinny-arse French twat!

(without pause turns back to JEAN as if nothing has interrupted him)

Art is my chief preoccupation, Jean, its meaning, its significance, its ability to educate and enthrall, to inspire and civilise.

REGGIE takes a book from his jacket pocket.

JEAN

(ironic)

So you do a lot of reading.

REGGIE

(smiles)

Yes, I do a lot of reading. You might want to look at this.

He turns to a page. She takes the book and begins to read.

JEAN

"Works of art are of an infinite loneliness and nothing can reach them so little as criticism. Only love can grasp them and keep hold of them and be just to them."

She looks up at him. Pauses, and shares with him something quite private -

JEAN (CONT'D)

It was after I had passed my peak - that the pressure became huge. And I was so aware of criticism and the importance of getting a good review...the next thing has to be as good or better and of course it can't be, so in the end you get very nervous.

They are closer than they have been since they met. Very close.

Suddenly, they hear a noise. JEAN and REGGIE look around. Behind a hedge they see a startled ANGELIQUE and SIMON quickly gathering up a blanket. They both stand, SIMON holding the blanket under his arm. After a moment:

SIMON

We weren't doing anything.

JEAN

(smiles)

You weren't asked.

INT. MUSIC ROOM/SMALL MUSIC ROOM - EVENING

From the outside: FELICITY accompanying NIGEL doing "Tit-Willow." After a few phrases, camera pans over to the SMALL MUSIC ROOM. Seated are CEDRIC, CISSY and REGGIE. Though we can't hear, CEDRIC is talking to them while WILF closes the door.

WILF

Where is this going, Cedric?

CEDRIC

I'll cut to the chase. I have a brilliant suggestion. Since the four of you are here together again, I put it to you, that you should perform - at - the - gala -
(dramatic pauses)
- the quartet from Rigoletto.

CISSY

(gasps)

That's amazing. I've been listening to us, Rig -

CEDRIC

(cuts her off)

Think of the publicity, The Times, The Telegraph, Opera Today. We have four of the finest singers in English operatic history. We'd more than sell out.

Silence. Then:

WILF

(quietly to REGGIE)

We all know the bloody thing, we
won't have to rehearse that much.

CISSY

But Jean won't sing in the gala.

CEDRIC

Oh, but you must change her mind.
She's a huge draw. It would be as
if Maria Callas were making a come-
back.

REGGIE

I'm not sure I want to sing with
Jean again.

CEDRIC

(looks at others)

Why not?

CISSY

They were married, but it didn't -

REGGIE

No- Cissy, leave it out. No, I
don't want to.

CEDRIC

(studies REGGIE)

Well, it's a shame. I can't count
the number of galas you have graced
over the years with your
incomparable voice, and I mean that
sincerely. I don't think you
realize it Reggie, but people still
talk about your 'Celeste Aida' four
years ago. Your 'Ave Maria' two
years ago.

(REGGIE beginning to
weaken)

I know you don't think much of me,
Reggie, that's fine, but for what
it's worth, when I heard you sing
your 'Nessun Dorma' at the gala
last year, all I thought was 'Eat
your heart out, Pavarotti!'

(REGGIE weakening more)

With this one concert, we could
raise enough money to get us
through and attract much needed new
benefactors. You would help save
Beecham House, Reginald.

(meaningfully)

(MORE)

CEDRIC (CONT'D)

Unfortunately, art is a luxury to be paid for by those to whom it matters.

Silence. CEDRIC senses the hook is set.

CEDRIC (CONT'D)

Well, I must leave. At any rate, I appreciate your consideration.

CEDRIC leaves.

WILF

(trying to be off-hand)
It's one gala, Reg. You could do it. You could persuade Jean. I know it.

REGGIE

(looks at WILF, says wryly)
Well, money has always driven art.

He takes out his notebook and pen.

WILF

One gala. It's our life.

REGGIE

(as he's writing)
Count Kaiserling commissioned the Goldberg Variations. Culture wasn't spread by artists but by merchants -
(hands the note to CISSY)
It's to save Beecham House.

WILF

Well done, Reg.

CISSY

Thank you, dear, dear, Reggie.

INT. JEAN'S ROOM - EVENING

JEAN sits in fading light reading REGGIE'S book by Rilke. Suddenly, the door opens, CISSY darts in, puts the folded note on a table and disappears.

Intrigued, JEAN rises, goes over to the door. She unfolds the note and reads. She is puzzled and suspicious.

INT. DR. COGAN'S OFFICE - MORNING

DR. COGAN is seated at her desk, leaning back in her chair. WILF seated.

WILF

Just two favours -

DR. COGAN wishes to bring the negotiation to a conclusion -

DR. COGAN

Exactly what do you propose?

WILF

"The Swan" restaurant. Just the four of us.

DR. COGAN

Four?

WILF

Me, Reggie, Cissy and Jean. Nobby will drive us.

DR. COGAN

What's wrong with Tadek.

WILF

Night off.
(she's uncertain)
If we can persuade Jean to sing at the benefit Gala, think of the money we'd raise. Cedric said we could charge Covent Garden prices.

DR. COGAN

(writing it down)
In by ten-thirty. No later.

WILF

Twelve-thirty.

DR. COGAN

No.

WILF
Are you sure?

DR. COGAN
Yes.

WILF
What brand do you smoke, Lucy?

She looks at him. Starts writing.

DR. COGAN
Twelve-thirty. No later.

WILF
Done, Lucy.

DR. COGAN
And please, call me Dr. Cogan.

WILF
Done. Dr. Cogan.

DR. COGAN
Why is it, Wilfred, that I
always have the impression
you're up to no good?

WILF
Ah, that's because I'm always up to
no good.
(sees flowers in a vase)
May I? And please call me Wilf.

WILF takes one and puts it in his lapel.

DR. COGAN
What's the second favour?

WILF
Guess.

DR. COGAN
I'll pick the lesser of two
evils. You want to call me
Lucy.

WILF
Yes, for starters.

DR. COGAN
I'm not sure I want those in my
care to become too familiar.

WILF
Try it and see.

DR. COGAN

Why do you persist in flirting
with me?

WILF

Because you're a cracker, Lucy.
Not a bird, not a girl, not a
bimbo, but a rare species, a
real woman.

DR. COGAN

(starts to rise)

I'm flattered, but I have
professional ethics to uphold.

WILF

Throw caution to the winds,
Lucy. If we were to - how shall
I put it? - make magnificent
music together, I would never
report you -

DR. COGAN

(ushering him to the door)

That is reassuring, Wilf.

WILF

(rising)

Think about it, Lucy.

DR. COGAN

No, Wilf.

WILF

A weekend in London?

DR. COGAN

No, Wilf.

WILF, at the door, takes the hint.

WILF

No one will know, Lucy.

DR. COGAN

But I will know, Wilf.

WILF

(vague gestures of
promise)

Lucy, an older man - vintage
wine - seasoned wood -

DR. COGAN

Did you say seasoned wood?

WILF smiles.

Overlap, from a MUSIC ROOM, a muted trumpet (TONY ROSE) practicing the quartet from Rigoletto.

INT. STAIRCASE HALL - MAGIC HOUR

WILF and CISSY, dressed for the occasion but in clothes a little out of date.

REGGIE, also very smart, on the look-out. All three are pleasurably excited.

WILF

Cissy, remember, as rehearsed,
wait until she's legless, then
we hit her with it.

CISSY

(nods)
I won't say a word until you
give me the cue.

WILF

We'll get her so sozzled she'll say
yes to anything -

REGGIE

(hissing)
She's coming - Here she is.
(resolve weakening)
Oh God, I don't know why I agreed to
this -

JEAN emerges on the landing also smartly dressed for the evening.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

(to WILF, sotto voce)
She looks - fairly all rightish.

As JEAN walks to the top of the stairs.

CISSY

You look lovely, Jean -

JEAN

Thank you.

WILF

You give new meaning to the word
'chic'. You agree, Reg?

REGGIE forces a smile.

JEAN

Thank you. This is so - so very
kind of you.

CISSY
It's the least we can do.

 WILF
The very least.

JEAN, at the top of the stairs, pauses, looks down as REGGIE reads her mind. He bounds up the stairs and offers his arm.

EXT. BEECHAM HOUSE - NIGHT

They all get into the van - it leaves.

INT. THE SWAN - BAR AREA - NIGHT

LARS, 40's, Danish male, leads JEAN, REGGIE, WILF and CISSY through the dining area, crowded with patrons. The quartet seems out of place, dressed in the fashion of the 70's.

As LARS leads them to their table.

 LARS
This way, Mr. Bond. We have your table ready and a bottle of the house red and a bottle of the house white, just as you asked.

 WILF
Thank you, Lars. Quick as you can.

The four walk out of shot to the booth.

INT. THE SWAN - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

WILF, tipsy, finishes a bottle by topping up their glasses as they are about to finish their main courses. A WAITER puts more bottles on the table, takes the empty ones, and leaves.

 WILF
A toast! To you, Jean. From all of us. Welcome.

They clink glasses to JEAN - she looks at them warmly.

 JEAN
Thank you.

 CISSY
You have to make eye contact when you clink or else it's bad luck.

They re-clink their glasses, making eye contact.

ALL

Cheers!

While they finish their main course:

CISSY

(staring at JEAN, a
bit in her cups)

Jean, do you listen to your old
recordings?

Before JEAN can answer.

CISSY (CONT'D)

I listen to us a lot. As a matter
of fact, they wanted Reggie to sing
La donna è mobile for the Gala. But
now, Jean, it's so exciting they
want us -

WILF puts a restraining hand on CISSY'S arm.

JEAN

What?

REGGIE

(jumping in)

"La donna è mobile qual plumo
al vento." Women are as fickle
as a feather in the wind.

JEAN

(she eats and drinks,
ignoring the
inference)

I fell in love with you when I
first heard you sing that.

REGGIE

(he sips wine)

That's why I never sang it
again. I took twelve curtain
calls.

JEAN

You took nine, I took twelve.

REGGIE

Who's counting?

JEAN eyes him, eating and drinking. WILF refills her
glass, but JEAN remains stone cold sober. The others do
not.

JEAN

The other night, at the opera house, as Sir George's guest I received a standing ovation. Wasn't that something?

REGGIE

Now you're doing it again.

JEAN

What?

REGGIE

(rather tiddly)
Repeating yourself. But what's it matter? In opera, we repeat ourselves all the time, repeat, repeat, repeat ourselves-
(WILF joins in)
-ourselves, ourselves,
(in Italian)
- ci ripetiamo, ci ripetiamo, continuamente -

JEAN

You're both drunk.

REGGIE nods yes.

WILF

Sì, perché no. E Adesso...
(A toast to the quartet in Italian)
Un brindisi al quartetto

Everyone raising their glasses.

JEAN

(as they are toasting)
What quartet?

ALL

Cheers!

JEAN

What are you talking about?

WILF

Cedric wants us to sing at Verdi's Birthday Gala -
(put his hand out to JEAN)
- wait for it, wait for it -

Pregnant pause. WILF nods to REGGIE. Then:

REGGIE & WILF

(in Italian)
- il quartetto dal Rigoletto.

They smile crookedly. Expressionless, JEAN looks shocked.

CISSY

(tipsy)

That means the quartet from Rigoletto.

JEAN

(stunned)

What a damn fool idea.

REGGIE

It's a great honour, Jean.

JEAN

A great honour?

CISSY

She said a great honour! She agreed! She's legless!

JEAN

No, I'm not legless. I haven't agreed to anything. And don't talk about me as if I'm not here.

(she looks at all of them)

This is why you asked me to dinner.

Pause.

WILF

No, we asked you because -

He breaks off.

CISSY

- because we love you.

They avert her gaze.

JEAN

Let me ask you something? When did you last sing? This morning in the bath? In the shower? Has anyone heard you recently? Have you any idea of the noise you now make? Do you really want to be a laughing stock? Why didn't you have the guts to just tell me what you wanted? How shameful of you to try to trick me. You're pathetic.

JEAN rises and walks out.

WILF

Whoops.

CISSY

Does that mean yes?

EXT. THE SWAN - NIGHT

JEAN marches from the pub. NOBBY exits the van and stands by the car door.

NOBBY
D'you have a good time?

JEAN
No. Open the door.

INT. THE SWAN - NIGHT

After a moment, WILF, REGGIE and CISSY begin to walk unsteadily through the restaurant. WILF tries to pick a flower from a vase and ends up toppling the vase, spilling the water.

WILF
(walking away)
I think I spilled.

WILF goes to leave, CISSY is ahead. They pass a television in the bar. CISSY continues on but something catches WILF and REGGIE'S eyes and they stop: A RAP GROUP singing but there is, of course, no sound.

WILF (CONT'D)
What d'you think they're singing, Reg?

After a moment:

REGGIE
Il quartetto da Rigoletto.

Angle from the back of WILF and REGGIE - we see WILF is gesturing, imitating the rap group.

EXT. THE SWAN - NIGHT

JEAN stares through the van window as WILF and REGGIE start to stagger out of the restaurant.

WILF
(raps in an English
accent)
...and I'm gonna live to be a
hundred, And I can tell you why,
(measures up with his arm)
'Cos I can still get it up - oh so
high!

REGGIE
(gestures with his arm,
but much lower)
He can still get it up - but not so
high.

WILF
(laughing)
Yo, yo, oh so high.

NOBBY
(calling from the van)
Sorry to interrupt Gents, but Miss
Horton would like to go back.

The van's engine starts.

REGGIE
(laughing)
Yo, yo, yo, not so high.

WILF, REGGIE and CISSY stagger to the people carrier and get in.

INT. PEOPLE CARRIER (TRAVELLING) - NIGHT

JEAN sits on the right side, staring out of the window. On the left side, REGGIE is staring out of his window, trying to stay awake. WILF and CISSY are asleep.

INT. JEAN'S ROOM - NIGHT - RAIN

33 RPM record coming out of sleeve and onto a turntable. Close up of the needle hitting the record.

JEAN is silhouetted, sitting, listening, following almost soundlessly to her aria from Madama Butterfly, "Un Bel Di Vedremo."

INT. DINING ROOM - NEXT DAY BREAKFAST, MORNING

JEAN enters the dining room in her dressing gown and walks up to the table.

JEAN

Why didn't you just come out with it - instead of this charade of taking me to dinner. Why didn't you just say, you wanted us, average age hundred and ninety-eight, singing the quarter from Rigoletto? An honour? It's not an honour? It's not an honour, it's insanity. What you did was disgusting. All of you!

(turning on REGGIE)

I'm going to say something very rude to you - Fuck you, fuck you Reginald Paget.

JEAN turns and walks out.

As CISSY, REGGIE and WILF try to adjust, aware of people in the dining room staring. One of them looks out the window and sees paramedics wheeling a gurney carrying OLLY, with DR. COGAN following. She has words with the paramedics and then turns. She walks towards the dining room and enters.

DR. COGAN

I just want to say that it seems Olly isn't well...it's his recurring condition. But he will be checked and he's going to be fine.

People in the room look at each other. Focus on WILF, REGGIE and CISSY, who starts to put her earphones on.

As DR. COGAN leaves we hear -

HARRY'S VOICE

Tell me, what are you doing in London?

GEORGE'S VOICE

London? I'm here looking for work.

HARRY'S VOICE

Work?

GEORGE'S VOICE

Work.

HARRY'S VOICE

In London? Heh Heh.

EXT./INT. MUSIC ROOM - DAY

GEORGE

Why, isn't there any work in London?

HARRY
Just a leetle bit!

GEORGE
Just a leetle bit!

HARRY
Just a leetle bit!

GEORGE
(posh)
Hey Mister, with everything in
life, I just would like to ask you
one question.

HARRY
(singing)
Why you silly so-and-so. With all
your dough.

GEORGE and HARRY continue to sing Flanagan & Allen's - "Are
You Havin' Any Fun" with TONY ROSE on Trumpet and DAVE on
piano.

Through the window, we see -

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

CISSY, NOBBY and SIMON picking flowers. CISSY walks away
with a large bundle of flowers.

INT. JEAN'S ROOM - DAY

Close up of JEAN's face.

JEAN
Go away! Go away!

CISSY, standing in the open doorway, holding flowers.

CISSY
It's me, Jean. Cissy.

JEAN
I said go away!

CISSY insists, holding the flowers. She comes a few steps
in.

CISSY
But I've brought you a present,
these are beautiful Iceberg
roses.

JEAN
Get out!

CISSY

Nobby has never allowed them to be picked before.

(smiling, hopeful)

You see, I just want to talk to you about the Quartet, it's such a good -

JEAN, out of her chair, grabs some of the flowers from CISSY.

JEAN

(yelling)

Get out! Leave me alone you stupid cow!

INT. MAIN HALL LANDING - DAY

CISSY, stunned, turns to run out the door as JEAN throws flowers at her. Covering her ears and eyes closed, she collides with a STAFF PERSON carrying a tray of glasses. She falls down near the railing. Alarmed faces from below look up. The remaining flowers float down to the ground.

INT. SANITORIUM - NIGHT

A dimly lit room. Empty beds except for one that has screens partially concealing the patient. SHERYL, the nurse, in attendance.

CISSY, in bed, subdued, but smiling bravely. REGGIE and WILF sit either side.

CISSY

I don't know why everyone is making such a fuss. I'm sure she didn't mean it.

REGGIE

(quietly)

Jean always means it.

CISSY

Does she? Oh, dear. It's so hard always trying to see the good in people. Maybe she's just depressed.

REGGIE

Do you feel up to telling us what happened?

SHERYL comes to her bedside and takes her pulse.

CISSY
 (groggy)
 She threw something at me.

WILF
 What did she throw?

CISSY
 I think the heat is getting to
 her. I really do think she'll
 find it cooler in Simla.

WILF, REGGIE and SHERYL exchange looks.

SHERYL
 Very likely.

DR. COGAN enters.

DR. COGAN
 I hope you haven't let them
 stay too long, Sheryl-

SHERYL
 No, Dr. Cogan -

REGGIE
 (aside, to DR. COGAN)
 She'll be all right, will she?

DR. COGAN
 Yes, of course. Just a little
 shocked, that's all. We'll keep
 her overnight.

SHERYL
 You'll be fine in the morning
 won't you, my darling?

CISSY
 Thank you, Sheryl.
 (to WILF)
 Such a dear girl. Beautifully
 endowed, don't you think?

WILF smiles. DR. COGAN gestures REGGIE and WILF to
 leave. She beckons SHERYL to the table near the door and
 looks at her notes.

WILF
 (indicates an empty
 bed, quietly)
 I say, Lucy, I see you have an
 empty bed. You wouldn't like to
 keep me in overnight, would
 you? I feel a headache coming
 on.

DR. COGAN
 She needs her sleep. Come back
 tomorrow.

WILF
 (as he's leaving)
 It's a shame to let it go to
 waste.

INT. MAIN HALL LANDING - NIGHT

REGGIE and WILF walk down the corridor towards the
 stairs.

WILF
 Remember Barber of Seville in
 the sixties at Covent Garden.
 Who was that big mezzo-soprano
 who was doing it with that
 little tenor in the bathtub.
 She got suctioned in. What was
 her name?
 (no answer from
 REGGIE)
 In London, remember? The little
 guy couldn't get her out.

REGGIE still doesn't answer, but smiles. They reach the
 top of the stairs.

WILF (CONT'D)
 She was Italian. Remember? The
 tenor had to dial 999.

REGGIE
 (reluctantly)
 Beatrice Botticelli.

At that moment they see JEAN'S head come into view
 slowly as she's ascending the stairs.

JEAN
 (as she reaches the top
 of the stairs)
 How is she?

WILF
 She'll be fine.
 (She walks past them;
 they start down the
 stairs)
 You're right, Beatrice
 Botticelli.
 (slowly going out of
 view)
 They say her high notes were
 never the same.

INT. SANITORIUM - NIGHT

SHERYL is at the foot of CISSY'S bed, reading notes.
JEAN enters.

SHERYL
Sorry, Miss Horton, she's
sleeping.

JEAN hesitates.

JEAN
Will you be sure she knows I
came to see her?

SHERYL
Yes, of course.

JEAN
I'll come back in the morning.

JEAN turns to go. From behind the screen:

A VOICE
Jean? Is that you?

JEAN is taken aback.

JEAN
Who's that?

SHERYL
Mr. White.

JEAN
(amazed)
Frank White? May I see him?

BEHIND THE SCREENS

FRANK WHITE, a once dazzlingly handsome man, in his late 70's, and somewhat frail, lies in bed as JEAN comes round the screens.

FRANK
I thought I recognised your
voice.
(a smile)
As who could not?
Just one of my spells. Nothing
serious. But I won't be taking
part in the gala.
(he gazes fondly at
her)
You're still very lovely, Jean.

JEAN

I had no idea you were here. I would have visited you.

(lovingly)

Dear, dear Frank.

(sits beside the bed)

How are you?

FRANK

Thank you.

(she takes his hand;
they smile.)

What a fling we had.

JEAN

Yes, what a fling, indeed. Short but giddy.

FRANK

And that luxurious hotel.

JEAN

I don't remember the hotel. I remember you rushing off and not seeing you for days on end.

FRANK

Yes, but you never guessed.

JEAN

Never guessed what?

FRANK

You remember Enrico Cardinale?

JEAN

The baritone? Of course I remember him. I had a fling with him, too.

FRANK

So did I. At the same time as I was having you.

JEAN

No! Did you, Frank?

FRANK

I certainly did.

(they laugh then look lovingly at each other)

And you've been up to your usual tricks.

(nods to CISSY in the other room)

I heard it all from Cissy.

JEAN

I don't know what came over me.
I'm very ashamed but I'm so
unhappy here and -

Her voice trails off.

FRANK

Poor Cissy. She does so want to
perform the quartet.

JEAN

Not possible.

FRANK

(studies her)

A word of advice. Take part. If
you can't sing at the gala, do
conjuring tricks. The only
alternative is to be the guest
of honour at the crematorium.

His words touch and trouble her.

EXT. TOWN - MORNING - RAIN

NOBBY comes out of a store holding an umbrella and packages.
Wrapping paper is sticking out of one of the packages.
Overlap Barber of Seville.

INT. MAIN HALL/MAIN HALL LANDING - MORNING

NOBBY continues past the Common Room. In the background,
REGGIE, WILF, BOBBY and CISSY rehearsing BARBER OF
SEVILLE. He continues to JEAN'S room and knocks. She
answers, takes the packages, thanks him, gives him a
note and some money. She says a few words to him that we
don't hear, as she closes the door.

INT. COMMON ROOM - MORNING

BOBBY, WILF and REGGIE are following a score. On TV is
The Barber of Seville which they are, at times,
watching. CISSY is sitting behind them.

BOBBY

Are you sure about this,
Wilfred?

WILF

It's the only trio we can think of,
Bobby. The three of us did the
Barber of Seville a dozen times.

BOBBY
 It's your decision. Now, let's
 see-
 (scanning the score)
 You'll each need at least six
 sessions -

Panic:

REGGIE & WILF
 Six?

WILF
 We don't have the time -

They look up to see NOBBY come into the room. He hands the note to REGGIE as he whispers something.

INT. JEAN'S ROOM - MORNING - RAIN

JEAN is seated rather regally. WILF, REGGIE and CISSY are standing just inside the door, before her. They exchange silent looks.

JEAN
 Please sit.

CISSY looks for a chair, vainly, and then sits on the edge of the bed. WILF, seeing no chair, up-ends a low wastepaper-bin and sits on it as REGGIE goes around the bed and sits in the chair by the dresser.

They sit.

JEAN (CONT'D)
 (gestures)
 Wilf, you can sit on the bed.

WILF
 I'm fine. I eat all my meals
 sitting on wastepaper-bins.

JEAN

(ignores his comment)
First of all - again, I want to apologise to you, Cissy. What I did was appalling. And to you, Wilf.

WILF

I don't remember you throwing anything at me.

JEAN

Please don't make fun of me. And to you, Reggie.

REGGIE

I think it is I who should apologise to you, Jean.

Their eyes meet. Finally she rises, goes to a side table, on top of which there are some poorly wrapped gifts.

JEAN

I have gifts for you.

She picks them up hands one to CISSY, one to WILF and walks around the bed and gives the third to REGGIE. She returns to her regal chair and sits.

JEAN (CONT'D)

Well. Open them.

CISSY tears open her package. WILF hold his badly wrapped gift out by one or two fingers.

CISSY

A CD of our Rigoletto! How lovely.

WILF smiles ironically.

JEAN

I know you already have copies, but I've signed those. So that makes them rather valuable.

WILF resists a comment.

JEAN (CONT'D)

I also wrapped them myself.

WILF

I was thinking you did.

JEAN ignores WILF, looks at REGGIE who has just opened his gift, a jar of lime marmalade and looks up at JEAN. He is moved. Their eyes meet.

From somewhere, the sound of a violin playing Massenet's Meditation from Thais, to the accompaniment of a harp.

There is an awkward silence.

WILF (CONT'D)
(looks at others)
Is that it?

JEAN
(confused)
Yes.

WILF rises awkwardly from his perch and moves to the door.

WILF
(at door)
Thanks for the signed CD. Do you
mind if we put them on eBay?

Another awkward pause. WILF and REGGIE exchange shared looks. CISSY, still seated on the bed, looks in her purse.

JEAN
(rises)
Thank you for coming.

CISSY, rises, confused, takes out earphones attempts to untangle them.

WILF
C'mon Cissy.

CISSY goes toward WILF. REGGIE stands by his chair.

CISSY
(still untangling
earphones)
Have you changed your mind about
the gala?

JEAN
(emphatic)
No.

WILF
(a slow burn)
Of course you haven't. Why should
you? It's only to celebrate and
honour the birthday of one of the
greatest composers for the human
voice who has ever lived.

JEAN
You must understand that I was
somebody once -

CISSY
 (still untangling)
 I thought I was somebody now -

JEAN
 But to be honest, I shone the
 brightest in the firmament.

WILF murmurs a Gaelic curse. JEAN realizes she's gone too far.

JEAN (CONT'D)
 I cannot insult the memory of who
 I once was.

WILF
 (explodes)
 "The memory?" What do you mean "the
 memory?" Whose "memory?" Your fans?
 They're dead. They're all dead!
 Either that or they're living here
 and soon will be.

REGGIE holds a hand out to stop WILF.

WILF (CONT'D)
 For Christ sake Jean, all you've
 ever done is to rely on external
 affirmation. And look what it cost
 you. Just fucking do it!

JEAN
 What you refuse to understand is
 that I'm a different person today.

WILF
 No, you're not. Nor are we. We've
 aged, that's all. And it happened
 so fast, we didn't have time to
 change. In spirit, I'm the same
 lovely lad I always was. I just
 happen to be trapped in a cage made
 of rusty iron bars, with, thank the
 lord, an undiminished level of
 testosterone.

JEAN
 I simply can't.
 (all eyes on her; barely
 audible)
 My gift deserted me.

REGGIE
 It deserted us, too, Jean. It's
 called life.

JEAN
 (looks at REGGIE)
 Yes. Shit happens.

CISSY
 Oh my darling, ageing is not for
 sissies.

JEAN
 No.

Her eyes fall on REGGIE's.

REGGIE
 Let go, Jean, let go. There's no
 harm. Who knows - we might even
 enjoy it. We're artists aren't we?
 And we're meant to celebrate life.
 What else were we doing for all
 those years?

JEAN
 Oh Christ, Reggie. Are you telling
 me to go out and smell the roses?

CISSY
 Oh - the roses are long gone. But
 the chrysanthemums are
 extraordinary.

All smile. It breaks the tension.

CISSY (CONT'D)
 Please, Jean. If you say yes,
 Cedric will give us the star spot
 instead of Anne Langley.

JEAN
 (suddenly alert)
 Anne Langley? Here at Beecham
 house? I thought they'd committed
 her.

CISSY
 She wanted to sing Violetta. She
 was a very fine Violetta.

JEAN
 Oh please, Cissy, Violetta is
 supposed to be dying of
 tuberculosis. Anne Langley looked
 as if she was singing Falstaff
 and she sounded like a cat hang
 gliding.

CISSY
 Well, she's singing Tosca now.
 We would have the Finale, Jean!

JEAN

Tosca?

CISSY

You were the most brilliant Tosca ever, Jean. The last time I heard her Tosca, her vibrato sounded like it was waving at us.

JEAN

Not waving, but drowning.

REGGIE

Is that a yes?

OMITTED

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

Chatter. CISSY and WILF at their table. Sudden silence, then excited murmurs. Entering the dining room, JEAN on REGGIE'S arm making a royal entrance. They pass ANNE LANGLEY. JEAN gives her a gracious smile, a Queen Motherly wave. ANNE LANGLEY stares back, she gets up and marches out of the dining room.

JEAN and REGGIE reach the table.

As JEAN sits -

One at a time, then joining all together, SIX RESIDENTS spread throughout the room start singing "Happy Birthday," as EVA and MARTA bring a lit Birthday cake towards OCTAVIA in her wheel chair.

ALL
(singing)
Happy Birthday, dear Octavia. Happy
Birthday to you.

Applause from the room as JEAN watches.

INT. ANNE LANGLEY'S ROOM - EVENING

ANNE LANGLEY stands up, furious.

On the wall, posters with her name written in large type. Photographs, one of her, curtsying low, being presented to the Queen.

LETITIA
Pull yourself together, Anne.
What does it matter when you
sing?

ANNE LANGLEY
I was told I had the finale.
I've been second fiddle to Jean
Horton for God knows how many
years.
(MORE)

ANNE LANGLEY (CONT'D)

And I only ever got the parts
she turned down. In my sleep
I'm a far better singer than
she is and she's - she's so -
so anorexic. Damn her! It's not
fair! She only sings from the
chest. Damn her!

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

We hear music from Rigoletto from inside the church.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

The STRING QUARTET, TONY ROSE, LETITIA with FELICITY
turning pages, finish the music.

Seated are REGGIE, WILF, CISSY and JEAN. All eyes on JEAN.

JEAN

(quietly)

I think we have to cut down the
length. I don't think I can get my
breathing back. I'm not sure about
the top notes.

They nod. They knew her. They know her work ethic.

INT./EXT. MONTAGES

Intercut JEAN'S preparations with the Gala preparations.
Played against BACH'S Piano Fugue in D-Minor.

Concluding with - The Steinway being wheeled into place by
NOBBY and SIMON, just below the stage while lights are being
rigged. NOBBY then instructs SIMON upstairs on the railing
how to use the follow spots.

EXT. DRIVE, BEECHAM HOUSE- DAY

Cars arriving. Visitors of all ages tramp down towards
the house.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

VISITORS greeting RESIDENTS. Chatter, laughter. On an
easel, a hand-painted poster:

JEAN HORTON SINGS and other names.

SHERYL and DWAYNE sit at a table issuing tickets and
taking money.

INT. COMMON ROOM - DAY

RESIDENTS being made up by DWAYNE, ANGELIQUE, MARTA, TRACY, and SHERYL. Chatter and excitement, occasional laughter.

INT. MAIN HALL - DAY

The audience continues to settle in. DR. COGAN greets some of the visitors.

INT. COMMON ROOM - DAY

REGGIE and WILF are putting the final touches to their Brindisi attire: hair, makeup, etc. behind the screens.

REGGIE

...and then I'll say that the quartet from Rigoletto is not only one of Verdi's masterpieces, but also one of the great milestones in the history of opera. And then I shall introduce each of us in turn -

JEAN

(sitting at a mirror in her dressing gown, doing makeup and hair, etc.)

I will enter last.

WILF raises his eyes to heaven.

CISSY, dressed for the Brindisi and holding articles of makeup is on her way out.

JEAN (CONT'D)

Cissy, where are you going? You have to help me with my gown.

CISSY

Of course I will Jean. I'm just going to do Anne Langley's makeup.

JEAN

You'll need a lot of makeup for that face.

OMITTED

OMITTED

INT. MAIN HALL - DAY

The RESIDENTS, including CISSY, REGGIE and WILF, filing on to the stage and taking their places. BOBBY supervising.

CEDRIC peers into the crowd from behind the curtains.

CEDRIC
(to BOBBY)
...and that's the critic from The Times.

IN FRONT OF THE CURTAINS

DR. COGAN goes to the front and faces the audience.

DR. COGAN
Ladies and gentlemen-
(a hush)
Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Beecham House and our annual Gala in honour of Giuseppe Verdi. And today, we celebrate his hundredth birthday. First, I would like to express our debt of gratitude to the amazing Mr. Cedric Livingstone for organising the event.

Applause. CEDRIC makes his entrance to his seat and acknowledges the applause graciously.

BEHIND THE CURTAINS

BOBBY, in white tie and tails, peeping through the curtains at the audience.

CEDRIC
Thank you, thank you, ladies and gentlemen. And let me just say, in all modesty, great artists need a great director -

Applause. CEDRIC milks it, and then sits.

DR. COGAN
This year, in aid of our rebuilding programme, you have all responded so generously and we thank you for that with all our hearts. And, I, too, would like to thank all those taking part in the Gala itself. The preparations and rehearsals have kept everyone busy and excited for the past few months.

DR. COGAN (CONT'D)
 I, and all my staff, feel highly privileged to have in our care such talented people, gifted musicians who seem to find renewed energy when they anticipate performing before an audience. It keeps them young.

IN FRONT OF THE CURTAINS

Sympathetic laughter and applause.

DR. COGAN (CONT'D)
 And just let me say something else on behalf of everyone working in Beecham House. We owe those in our charge an enormous debt. They inspire us. Yes, their love of life is infectious and gives us all faith in the future. I mean that. Now. I know many of you are eagerly awaiting our star turn this evening who has proved such an attraction but about whom I will say no more.

Applause and murmurs.

DR. COGAN (CONT'D)
 Thank you and I hope you have - I'm sure you will have an enjoyable afternoon.

She takes her seat as LETITIA and FELICITY enter. CEDRIC ostentatiously starts the applause.

LETITIA sits at the piano, FELICITY beside her to turn the pages. The audience begin to settle.

BEHIND THE CURTAINS

BOBBY, in the wings through the curtains, turns, makes a gesture for the RESIDENTS (including REGGIE, WILF and CISSY) to be still, then a nod.

IN FRONT OF THE CURTAINS

The lights dim. Murmur of anticipation. After a moment the curtains open and the RESIDENTS are revealed, made-up and glowing. Wild applause.

BOBBY holds up his hands. Silence.

BOBBY gives LETITIA the cue and she starts the introduction to the Brindisi.

The residents begin to sing with great enthusiasm.

INT. COMMON ROOM - DAY

JEAN, sitting at her mirror. The sound of applause. CISSY bursts in.

CISSY
Oh, it's so exciting. They
loved the Brindisi.

JEAN
You've kept me waiting. Please help
me with my dress.

CISSY
Instantly.

REGGIE and WILF pop in on the way to their room -

WILF
Who's on next?

CISSY
Anne Langley.

JEAN
(alert)
I'll be right back.

We hear ANNE LANGLEY begin her aria. JEAN leaves. REGGIE and WILF share a look.

INT. MAIN HALL - DAY

ANNE LANGLEY is singing the aria from Tosca - Vissi
D'Arte, accompanied by LETITIA.

INT. MAIN HALL - BACKSTAGE - DAY

Peeking between the curtains backstage, JEAN watches and
listens to ANNE LANGLEY'S every move.

OMITTED

INT. MAIN HALL - BACKSTAGE - DAY

As ANNE LANGLEY comes to the end of her Vissi D'Arte aria. She sings astonishingly. JEAN stays to observe the applause as Gilbert and Sullivan wait in the wings.

INT. MAIN HALL - DAY

The audience applaud and cheer ANNE LANGLEY. She beams with pleasure. Someone throws a corsage on to the stage. As she starts to retrieve it, SIMON runs from the wings and hands it to her.

Gilbert and Sullivan come onto the stage.

OMITTED

INT. MAIN HALL - DAY

In full swing, LOTTE, NORMA and MARION perform the last chorus of Three Little Maids from School. They wear makeshift kimonos and flutter their fans expertly.

The audience are enchanted and applaud wildly.

INT. COMMON ROOM - DAY

CISSY is helping JEAN on with her costume.

CISSY

Jean, I have a confession to make.
I think I ought to tell you I had a
one-night stand with Roberto
D'Angelo, the same week you did.

JEAN

(amused and surprised)
Not you, too, Cissy? What a busy
boy he must have been.

CISSY

Yes and very potent.

They smile at each other. CISSY is doing up the hooks on the back of JEAN'S dress. After a moment -

CISSY (CONT'D)

How long were you married to
Reggie?

JEAN

Not for very long.

CISSY

How long?

JEAN

Exactly nine hours.

CISSY finishes JEAN'S hooks and starts to put on her own dress.

CISSY

Nine hours. How long did you know
each other?

JEAN

Before we were married, we had
been, how shall I put it,
passionate, if you know what I
mean?

CISSY
 (wistfully)
Oh, I do, I do.

 JEAN
After about a year, he got down on
his knees and asked me to marry
him. He was very old-fashioned, you
know.

 CISSY
He still is.

 JEAN
Yes, he is. So I agreed and a
date was fixed. But then we had to
change it because I got a job at La
Scala. And there I met- I met -

She hesitates.

Gilbert and Sullivan enter the Common Room, exhilarated.

 CISSY
Go on, go on, I'm breathless, who
was it?

 JEAN
No names, no arias. It was
nothing serious- just- just one
night - with an Italian tenor.

 CISSY
Just one night?

 JEAN
Two. They never take no for an
answer. Anyway, Reggie and I were
eventually married at three o'clock
on a Sunday afternoon in May. My
father gave us a suite at the Savoy
Hotel. We were to spend the night
there and then go to Paris the next
morning for our honeymoon. We had a
champagne supper. Scrambled eggs,
toast and lime marmalade. And then
I blurted it out. I told him I'd
been unfaithful when I sang at La
Scala.

 CISSY
 (shocked)
You didn't!

 JEAN
I did.

 CISSY
Why? Why did you tell him?

JEAN

I don't know. I just did. I felt the need to be honest.

CISSY

That's always a mistake.

JEAN

Reggie demanded to know why I didn't cancel the wedding. He was very angry...

She breaks off.

CISSY

And he walked out.

JEAN

No, he ran.

CISSY

But he was heartbroken, Jean, by your confession, because you'd been unfaithful -

After a moment, JEAN nods, wearily, resigned.

JEAN

Yes, yes, I know that now. I was young and impetuous and driven.

(beat - lost in thought)

I was afraid of us. I had my career.

CISSY

That's why you cheated?

JEAN
 No. That's why I told him.
 (beat)
 And that was the mistake of my
 life. And now it's too late.

CISSY
 You still have your future.

JEAN
 I don't think there's a lot of it -
 there just isn't. It's all *been*.

INT. COMMON ROOM - DAY

GEORGE, HARRY, TONY and DAVE finish "Underneath the
 Arches" to great applause.

They bow, look at CEDRIC who is not applauding. They wave
 their hands to encourage him to clap. He does so. Limply.

HARRY
 Encore! Encore!

GEORGE
 I thought you'd never ask -

CEDRIC gives them a vulgar V sign as they go into 'RUN
 RABBIT RUN'.

INT. FITNESS ROOM & SMALL MUSIC ROOM - DAY

JEAN is now doing up the hooks on CISSY'S dress. JEAN
 struggles with CISSY'S hooks.

JEAN
 God, this is too tight for you,
 Cissy, I can't fasten it-

CISSY
 (becomes agitated)
 But I altered it, I altered it-

A knock on the door and SIMON puts his head round.

SIMON
 It's getting near, ladies -
 (calling)
 Did you hear that, gents, it's
 getting near?

REGGIE
 Thank you, Simon.

SIMON goes. JEAN still struggling. CISSY, more agitated.

CISSY
I altered it. Try, Jean, do try-

JEAN
I am trying, I can't fasten it-

CISSY
Stop, stop! I'll take it off,
I'll let it out a bit more.
(takes off her costume)
Where's the scissors?

She starts wandering aimlessly.

JEAN
Cissy, where are you going?

CISSY
Home. Didn't I tell you? I'm
going home -

CISSY'S eyes have a vacant look.

JEAN
What are you talking about?

CISSY starts to leave the dressing area and heads into
the COMMON ROOM.

CISSY
Well, I'm off. Goodbye.

JEAN hobbles after her.

JEAN
(calls out)
Crisis!

WILF and REGGIE, in various stages of formal dress,
follow CISSY and JEAN. CISSY sees them.

CISSY
Oh! How awful, I nearly went
without saying goodbye.
Goodbye, Wilfred, Reginald.
Wish me bon voyage.

CISSY starts to hurriedly walk through the COMMON ROOM
toward the French doors.

WILF
For God's sake, don't let them
see her in this state -

REGGIE moves fast after her.

OMITTED

INT. COMMON ROOM - DAY

To the sound of the string quartet playing the Adagio, REGGIE chases after CISSY. GEORGE and HARRY watch bewildered as they head back to the dressing area.

CISSY makes for the French doors as REGGIE reaches her, panting.

REGGIE

Cissy, you're not to leave.
It's Verdi's birthday gala.
Now.

(CISSY stares at him)

We're doing the Quartet from
Rigoletto. The Quartet, Cissy-

CISSY

I do hope it goes well.
Goodbye-

(suddenly stops,
looks past REGGIE)

Isn't that Jean Horton? I
thought she wouldn't sing
anymore-

REGGIE turns to see JEAN and WILF approaching.

REGGIE

She's done for.

JEAN

(with some severity)

Cissy, pull yourself together.

CISSY stares blankly at her; JEAN grips her hands.

CISSY

Mother and father are waiting
for me.

JEAN

You're not going anywhere,
you're staying here, with your
fellow artists. With your
friends, Cissy.

WILF

Friends who love you, Cissy.
We love you, Cissy!

(nothing from CISSY)

What's the Hindi for love?

(loudly)

I adore you, Cissy. Don't run
out on me.

JEAN
Cissy, your ship doesn't sail
for two weeks.

A faint, flickering response from CISSY.

CISSY
Doesn't it?
(suddenly alarmed)
What time is it?

JEAN
Late. You have work to do on
your dress.

An uneasy pause. Then, in a rush:

CISSY
Yes, yes, yes.
(WILF takes her by the
hand, starts to lead
her back)
It's always the little things
that upset one, it'll fit, I know
it'll fit-

REGGIE gives JEAN his arm as they, too, start to go
back.

REGGIE
(a sigh of relief)
That was a close run thing.
Well done, Jean.

JEAN
I had a great deal of experience
with my mother. Only she used to
become violent.

INT. MAIN HALL - DAY

The quartet is coming to the end of the third movement.

INT. COMMON ROOM - DAY

Back in the dressing area CISSY wriggles into her
costume.

CISSY
Let's try again-

JEAN starts to do her up. WILF is in the midst of
stuffing a second pair of socks into the front of his
pants.

WILF
 (to the girls)
 How's that? Am I a fine figure of a
 man or am I not?

REGGIE'S VOICE
 I have to say I find it very
 distasteful.

The girls ignore WILF.

CISSY
 (to JEAN)
 Well?

JEAN manages to fasten the dress.

JEAN
 Just.

CISSY
 Thank God for that.

WILF
 Well?

With one finger from each hand pointing in the direction of
 his crotch.

WILF (CONT'D)
 Well?

No one answers. As they continue getting ready. WILF
 walks back into his dressing area, removing the socks,
 shaking his head.

WILF (CONT'D)
 It was just a joke.

INT. MAIN HALL - DAY

The string quartet finish the third movement. JOEY, seated
 near CEDRIC, starts to applaud. CEDRIC instinctively grabs
 JOEY'S arm to stop him. JOEY aggressively whips his hand
 away. The string quartet begins the last movement.

INT. COMMON ROOM - DAY

REGGIE is looking at his score when SIMON pokes his head
 around the screen.

SIMON
 Places, ladies.
 (a little louder)
 Places, gentlemen.

ALL
 Thank you, Simon.

REGGIE gets up, taking CISSY with him. They walk toward the
 backstage area.

INT. MAIN HALL - DAY

The string quartet continues to play.

INT. COMMON ROOM/STAIRCASE HALL - DAY

WILF and JEAN walking toward the backstage area with their canes.

WILF

Jean, our sticks. I think we should try to get through without them.

JEAN

I'm not sure I can. My hip's very bad tonight.

WILF

I'm not sure I can either. But I think we should try. It would be more dignified. More operatic.

JEAN

I may have to lean on you.

WILF

Lean on Reg, it'd be safer. And he'd be very pleased. He adores you.

(she looks doubtful)

Trust me.

They enter backstage.

JEAN

(whispering)

Does he?

WILF

(whispering)

Of course he does. I don't think Reg has ever stopped loving you.

JEAN

How do you know? Has he said so?

JEAN catches REGGIE'S eye.

The String Quartet is coming to the end of the movement.

JEAN holds and then comes to him. They look at each other for a moment, then he looks away.

REGGIE
 (meaningfully)
 At least you won't be singing at La
 Scala again.

JEAN
 No. Never again. Never again,
 Reggie.

REGGIE
 Is that an apology?

JEAN
 It is.
 (she looks at him)
 You look very handsome tonight,
 Reg.

REGGIE
 (turning back to her)
 And you look very beautiful,
 Jean.

JEAN
 And now we are old.

A long look at JEAN from REGGIE.

REGGIE
 (is it tongue in cheek?)
 Then let's get married.

The string quartet has just finished their last movement and the audience is applauding. After a moment, REGGIE marches on the stage to an even bigger applause.

INT. MAIN HALL - DAY

A BRIGHT SPOTLIGHT bursts onto REGGIE.

The audience continues applauding, cheering and whistling. Some of the residents now stand or sit at the back and join in enthusiastically.

REGGIE bows, puts on his reading glasses and produces pieces of paper.

REGGIE
 Ladies and gentlemen, this afternoon,
 my three colleagues and I are hoping
 to transport you to times past. We
 have come to the conclusion, after
 much argument and discussion, that we
 are unchanged. At least in spirit. And
 that spirit is most intensely
 expressed when we sing.

(MORE)

REGGIE (CONT'D)

And so, on this 10th of October, the anniversary of Guiseppe Verdi, I hope you will be moved by the glorious music. Rigoletto is one of Verdi's masterpieces. And the quartet is one of the great milestones in the history of opera. So now it is time for me to make the introductions. I myself am, of course, the Duke of Mantua, and as Rigoletto, we are fortunate to have the popular, celebrated baritone, Mr. Wilfred Bond.

WILFRED walks on without cane to great applause and bows. When he straightens up:

REGGIE (CONT'D)

And, as Maddalena, our own, our very own, the delicious Miss Cecily Robson.

CISSY enters and curtsies to great applause and cheers.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

And last, but not least, one of the great stars in the operatic firmament for whom, I know, you have all been waiting, please welcome as Gilda, the great, the incomparable, Miss Jean Horton.

JEAN enters, without cane, walking with difficulty, can barely curtsey to the great applause and cheers.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentlemen, the quartet from Act Three, Scene One of Rigoletto by the great maestro, Guiseppe Verdi.

By now, the instrumentalists have assembled themselves next to the Piano. They begin to play the Quartet from Rigoletto.

The singers will commence singing. During it, we will see JEAN faltering. She will lose her balance and start to sink as REGGIE puts his arm around her waist to steady her.

JEAN will pick up again and the orchestra will continue.

Various moments like this will occur until the quartet finishes. At the conclusion, the audience will applaud and the quartet take their curtain calls. During the applause, JEAN will whisper to REGGIE -

JEAN

If you ever ask me to do this again,
I'll kill you.

They smile at each other as the audience continues to applaud.