

SATANELLA # 11

BY SERGEY MOSIENKO



Be careful with your thoughts - they are the beginning of deeds

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SATANELLA #11

Screenplay

by

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Based on the novel by A. Kuprin

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M81

Sergey Mosienko.

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Wise is a math teacher in New York, who lives a modest life and dreams of taking the post of the school headmaster. He is considered to be one of the best cryptographers in the world; and that is why Alba Flower, his lawyer, asks him for help, because only he knows that with the help of a secret key, one can discover the magic formula. Great power lies in that formula and with that power comes authority: this is something that people have been trying to achieve for a century. However, the circumstances are such that the deal with the evil spirit is off; it was after this that the teacher must be careful with his thoughts, which are beginning to turn into reality. Defiance of the enormous human temptations and Wise's indifference did not allow him to cover the entire globe with blood and light it with the glow of fires, even though his servant Flower is Satan's own helper.

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INT. AIRPLANE FLYER-A, MORNING

We see the pilot ORVILLE Wright and the passenger THOMAS Selfridge, sitting in the seats of the airplane. They have frightened faces. The engine is running loudly.

THOMAS

What happened?

ORVILLE

(shouting)

The propeller has cracked!

THOMAS

Damn, I shouldn't have mentioned the devil!

Orville is trying to straighten out the airplane and head for the airfield.

ORVILLE

What are you even talking about?

THOMAS

Well, before the flight, a very strange man in a black suit approached me and offered me a big reward if I didn't fly.

ORVILLE

And you?

THOMAS

I sent him to the devil...

ORVILLE
So the devil came
for us...

The airplane loses control and falls to the ground.

EXT. FORT MYER FIELD, VIRGINIA, MORNING

People are running to the airplane. Among them, we see WILBUR WRIGHT, EDITH BERG and the officers of the U.S. Department of Defense.

WILBUR
ORVILLE, are you all
right?

ORVILLE
Yes but there's an
engine lying on my
foot.

WILBUR
I'll get it off your
foot now.

EDITH
Thomas, how are you
feeling?

Thomas' head is lowered, his eyes are closed and he's silent. Blood is flowing from his temple. Edith takes his pulse.

WILBUR
What's with Thomas?

EDITH
No pulse. He's
dead...

Far away from the airplane, we see FLOWER. He's wearing a black coat and a black hat on his head. He opens the door and gets into a car.

INT. INSIDE THE CAR, MORNING

In the back seat, we see WISE, a mathematics teacher. He's dressed in a light suit, with a white hat on his head.

WISE

The flight didn't last long. The airplane fell. It happened because I wished it so if they didn't let me fly with them.

FLOWER

Sir, I have fulfilled your order. A person can learn to control an airplane but not his fate.

WISE

I need to buy an airplane like that.

FLOWER

As you wish.

INT. MCSORLEY'S OLD ALE HOUSE, EVENING

In a bar located in Manhattan's East Village at 15 E 7th St, we see Wise and his friend MORROW, sitting at the bar counter. Both are mathematics teachers. The BARTENDER is pouring beer into mugs. On the bar wall, we see the inscription, "Be Good or Be Gone."

WISE

Tell me this. Why do they scatter sawdust on the floor?

MORROW

So that these Irish waiters and bartenders have less work when patrons spill beer on the floor...

WISE

I see. But when they serve beer, they also spill it on the table...

MORROW

I want more beer, some raw onions with slices of cheese. Do you have any money?

WISE

Sorry, the money's all gone. Besides, we've had enough for today. Everything is bought and everything is sold if there's money!

MORROW

And besides, is there anything more valuable than money?

WISE

And what's more valuable than money, in your opinion?

MORROW

A dream!

WISE

Tell me.

MORROW

One should dream of wine, a game of cards, delicious food, luxurious velvet furniture, long journeys to exotic countries, fancy suits and diamond rings, their own horses and huge dogs. Add to that high society life in the company of earls and barons, theater and circus, a fling with some famous singer or animal tamer. Sweet idleness when you can sleep as much as you like, butlers in tail coats and, most importantly, you should dream about women, a whole harem of them, women of all colors, heights, constitutions, temperaments and nationalities.

WISE

You need money for a dream like that. Therefore, all that you're saying now is just empty words, an annoyance of a captive and pathetic thought.

MORROW

When dreaming of the impossible, you should at least dream bigger. You can live smart, useful and with some style. But why not suddenly become, as if by the wave of a magic wand, for example, the President of the United States? What are you dreaming about, Wise?

WISE

(smiles happily to their neighbors at the bar counter)

What I'm dreaming about? I don't need anything. Take this place... bright, cozy... a company of lovely, good friends... a nice conversation.

MORROW

You have no imagination!

WISE

I want a big garden... and many beautiful flowers in it. And all kinds of birds, which exist in the world and animals...

And they are all tame and nice. And we all live there...

simple, friendly and
happy... No one
quarrels or fights
over anything... A
garden full of
children... and we
all sing very
well... And work is
pleasure... And
different streams...
and the fish come
when you ring the
bell...

MORROW

In a word -
paradise!

WISE

Yes but I need money
for this. I'm
waiting for funding
from the Department
of Defense.

MORROW

You never told me
about that.

WISE

I've come up with a
cipher for the
American ships. Move
closer to me...

MORROW

(lighting a cigarette)
Tell me more about
this method.

WISE

It's a very elegant
method for a
polyalphabetic
cipher.

I use cylinder disks
or pieces with
letters on them. To
encrypt, you need to
rotate the cylinder
disks so that you
get a message and
then record some
other line. To
decrypt, you need to
rotate the cylinders
so that you get the
code and then search
for a line that
makes sense as a
message...

MORROW

And who'd need
something like that?

WISE

Don't yell... at the
Fore River
Shipbuilding Company
in Quincy,
Massachusetts, the
aircraft carrier
Birmingham was
launched on May 29,
1907, was
commissioned on
April 11, 1908 under
the command of
Commander B.T.
Walling. In 1909,
U.S.S. Birmingham
together with U.S.S.
Salem will go from
America to Libya and
back, participating
by request of the
American Navy in the
study of long-range
propagation of radio
waves under radio

physicist L. Austin
and his assistant
Dr. Louis Cohen's
command.

MORROW

I have always told
everyone: not only
you are the best
mathematician in
America but you're
also the best
cryptographer in the
world!

BARTENDER

Another round of
light beer on the
house.

Wise and Morrow drink their beer and leave. Wise goes home in the most wonderful mood. With a tender feeling, he watches the silver circle of the moon rapidly roll in the sky among the clouds.

INT. WISE'S APARTMENT, NIGHT

Wise takes his time before he enters his apartment, balancing between the wall and the railing. He silently opens the outer door, carefully undresses and goes to bed. He takes the morning newspaper that he hasn't finished reading but the letters are all blending together, forming blurry lines. Finally, his eyelids become heavy, his eyes close and he falls asleep.

INT. WISE'S APARTMENT, MORNING

Wise opens his eyes. He's frightened of something. He quickly sits down on the bed. In a dusty, golden solar pillar, which is slanting out of the window, slightly bent over in a half-bow, stands a STRANGER in a black frock coat. He's holding a black top hat. He has black gloves on his hands, a fiery red tie on his chest, an ancient, rumped, reddish briefcase under his arm and in his feet, on the floor, is a small new hand-bag of yellow English leather.

WISE

Who are you?

STRANGER

(in a creaky voice)
I knocked twice. No one answered. Then I decided to turn the handle. It was not locked. Amazing carelessness. To rob you would be the simplest thing. You know, there are such expert thieves, who only get into such apartments to say "good morning." I certainly wouldn't dare to disturb you this early.

WISE

I don't even know you.

Wise sees in front of him the straight, slightly hooked nose of the stranger with nervous goat nostrils, his pale, mockingly curved lips under his arrogant, belligerent mustache, his sharp long French beard.

But most of all, they resemble some kind of an old, half-forgotten image - the stranger's eyebrows, abruptly rising from the bridge of the nose in straight, dark, gloomy features. His eyes are almost colorless.

STRANGER

My name is Flower. I came to discuss your inheritance.

WISE

(with fright and haste on his face)
I'm Wise, a
mathematics teacher
but I need to get
up, get dressed and
go to work. I work
at a school.

FLOWER

(Takes out from his vest pocket an ancient, onion-shaped watch with a keyring on a hair cord in the form of Adam's head and looks at it)

It's three minutes
past ten. And if it
were not an
extremely important
and urgent matter...
No, do not worry
like that. You
probably won't even
have to go to work
today at all...

WISE

Ah, it's terribly
unpleasant. You
caught me undressed,
just wait a bit. I
will only tidy up
myself and will be
at your service
right away.

Wise puts on his shoes, puts on a robe and runs into the bathroom where he quickly washes and dresses. After a very short time, he returns to his guest refreshed, although with red and heavy eyebrows from yesterday's drinking. He sits down in front of the stranger.

WISE

Now I'm ready. We'll
have tea soon. To
what do I owe the
pleasure?

FLOWER

(holds out a business card)
First, please allow
me to introduce
myself. I'm a
lawyer.

WISE

(slightly tilts his head and
mutters with perplexity in
his eyes)
Nice to meet you
too. But I...

FLOWER

Just a second. Sorry
to interrupt you.
Your late father's
name was, if I'm not
mistaken, Rick.
Right?

WISE

Absolutely right.

FLOWER

Good. So his older
brother, now also
deceased, was
Stephen. Right?

WISE

Yes, right. But I
personally never met
him. I only
occasionally heard
something about him
from the family
memories of my
parents.

But that was a long
time ago... Just
some minor things...
and I'm very ashamed
that I seem to have
completely forgotten
them.

FLOWER

(casually waves his hand)

For us, the most
important thing in
our business is that
your respectable
uncle was, during
his lifetime, a man
of great
originality, that
is, a misanthrope,
unsociable and even,
they say, an
alchemist. It
doesn't matter
though. That's
nothing.

WISE

What is nothing?

FLOWER

(opens his shabby briefcase and
with the skill of a magician,
pulls out several papers of
different sizes and throws them
one by one on the table)
He was, as they say
- an eccentric.

WISE

Yes, I heard
something like that.
But I remember it
vaguely, as if
through a dream. Our
family didn't keep
in touch with him at

all. We became
estranged but
without any quarrel,
though.

FLOWER

Well then. Now let's
cut to the chase.
Ten years ago, your
uncle Stephen left
the earthly vale
because fate willed
it. For you, this
event obviously
didn't have any
significant meaning,
except for the
completely natural
realization of a sad
loss. Meanwhile,
Stephen left a small
inheritance. It's a
house at 3051 M
Street in
Georgetown,
Washington, DC. For
about eight years,
Old Stone House was
considered unowned.
And since I
investigate such
cases with unowned
property, having
learned by chance
about the house, I
followed the trail
of your deceased
uncle's life. That
put me in a quite
difficult position.
There was no will
and no legal heirs
had come forward.
Stephen's neighbors
only saw him from
afar and suspected

that he was either a mason, or an inventor, or maybe an anarchist - what did he care about a will? Most of the neighbors were convinced that he practiced magic and, perhaps, even sold his soul to the devil. But through various hints and conclusions, I slowly began to wade through the stages of your uncle's life. And finally, in the Treasury building in Washington, in the archives, I came across a genuine, albeit very ancient will, according to which the house with all the buildings, livestock and inventory, must go to the oldest in the family. According to the information I was able to gather, dear Wise, you are the oldest of that line, for which I have the honor to congratulate you sincerely.

WISE

(flushes and extends his hand)
Thank you.

FLOWER

(bows while still sitting
down)

And not to be
unfounded, let me
give you all the
documents that
clearly prove your
rights. Here's the
will. Here's the
livery...
Inheritance and
other duties. Here's
the acknowledgement
of receipt of said
land and other
taxes, with the
addition of
penalties over the
past years.

Flower speaks for some time in official words and numbers. Speaking this way, quickly and with his usual dexterity, one by one he slips Wise the papers, clearly written and typed, marked with round seals, ink and wax, and decorated with tricky curls of signatures and flourishes.

WISE

But you see,
honorable Mr.
Flower. All this is
so unexpected... I
do not understand
anything in such
matters. And then,
it's so far away -
Washington... I'm
positively lost and
must ask for your
help...

Besides, your kind efforts... Would you be so kind as to tell me how much you require for your services?

FLOWER

(laughs and lightly, very politely touches Wise's knee)
Money is no issue. We'll make it worth our while. I made some inquiries about you. Sorry, we, business people, cannot otherwise. And everywhere I asked about you, I heard you were the most decent, honest person, a real gentleman of a very generous nature. For myself in this regard, I'm calm. Well, let's say, twenty, fifteen percent of the bureaucratic estimate? If this seems too much for you, I will be more than happy with just ten.

WISE

Oh, no, please, please. Twenty it is.

FLOWER

(bows)

I'm grateful. And now, since you have already done me the honor of asking for my advice, I will allow myself to tell you this: go to Washington as soon as possible and inspect the house. I will even insist that you go today.

WISE

If I may, that's too fast. I must request a leave... Get money for the road... Pack. And you never know what else I may need.

FLOWER

That's nothing, I assure you. First, here's your leave. I procured this for you this morning from the headmaster. He delights in your happiness as if it were his own. You are positively a child of fortune. Here you go!

WISE

(whispers in amazement)
You are a magician.

Wise carefully examines his month-long leave for a family emergency, signed and sealed by the headmaster.

FLOWER

And don't worry
about money. My duty
- this is so common
among us, lawyers -
is to loan you a
certain amount, of
course, at the most
moderate interest.
Be kind to count.
This pack is exactly
one thousand
dollars. No, no, you
should take your
time and get your
fingers wet and
count this. Money
loves calculation.
And here's a receipt
that I have prepared
in advance, so as
not to waste time.
Just write "Wise" -
and there you have
it.

WISE

You are so kind and
helpful... that I...
that I... really, I
cannot find the
words.

FLOWER

Please, it's
nothing. And now,
when the formalities
are finished, I dare
to give you one more
surprise.

Flower pulls out two cardboard trimmings from the
briefcase.

FLOWER

This is a first
class ticket to
Washington Station
and this is a
reserved seat for
the lower bunk.
These tickets are
for today. The train
leaves exactly at
eleven thirty. The
driver is waiting
for us at the
entrance. Therefore,
all you have to do
is put your passport
and your notebook in
your pocket, put a
hat on, take that
cane in your hand
and then, "Andiam,
andiam, mio caro..."
And with your
permission, I will
help you pack!

WISE

(confused)

Oh, please, don't...
For heaven's sake...

Flower's face wrinkles with a joking but rather

FLOWER

You are so
fastidious. But in
this case, do not
refuse to take a
small traveling
present from me -
this bag. No, no, I
urge you not to
refuse.
I deliberately chose
this little thing
for your trip.

You will offend me
by not taking it.
Think about it
because I will make
a considerable
profit off of you.

WISE

Thank you. Great
thing.

Wise feels awkward, like he's bound and carried
away by someone else's will. Vague anxiety clouds
his simple heart.

WISE

(thinks to himself)
What a refined
solicitude on the
part of this
stranger and how
amazingly all the
events are
happening! Exactly
like in a dream. Or
am I really
sleeping? No, if I
were, I would not be
thinking that I was.
And the face, that
face... Where have I
seen it before?

Wise goes to the cabinet and begins sorting out his
toiletries.

WISE

But how unusual it
all is. If someone
had told me about
this morning
yesterday, I would
have laughed in
their face.

FLOWER

Ah, young man, young man... How little enterprise you have. Then again, all of us are like that: with a leisure but with a cool and a caution. And precious time is running, running and never, not a single minute that flashes will return. Well, let's be lively, American-style, in three steps. Your new shoes are outside the door. I asked the maid to clean them. Perhaps, you are surprised that I'm in such a hurry? Well, first, I myself do not have a second free. Once I escort you, I need to ride to the law office for urgent business. You know what they say, "the dog that trots about finds a bone." It's fine, don't mind me. You can dress in front of me without any embarrassment. I'm a man just like you. And secondly, judge for yourself: what good is going to come out of it if you spend a few extra days in the city?

After all, now all
your friends and
many strangers know
through the
headmaster about the
inheritance that has
dropped on you. Oh,
I know human nature
well. They will
start begging for a
loan, they will
offer that you
celebrate a payday,
good mothers of
adult daughters will
start hunting you.
You are a weak,
soft, compliant
person - a good
friend. You will
help them all and
make some debts. I
know of such cases.
And then some sort
of seductive passion
will turn up, like
that beauty from the
pastry shop,
remember?

WISE

Whom are you talking
about?

FLOWER

That plump blonde
behind the counter
at the Dumont's
store, the first
from the window,
with sapphire eyes?
Right, you listen to
me, an old dog. I
will teach you what
to do.

Especially that at first glance, you have inspired me with the deepest, one might say, paternal, sympathy. Just don't pay attention to me, pack! Pack! In the meantime, I will give you some necessary information. Please, don't take with you sheets and pillows. They will give all that to you in the sleeping car. And in the Old Stone House, they have beautiful, fine Dutch linen. And don't take too many shirts. Two, three changes. Take the soft ones. Some handkerchiefs and socks. Very nasty habit we have - traveling with a whole house of things. Take only what fits in the bag. You won't be needing more. You're going just for two, three days.

WISE

Do you think I'll manage to make all the arrangements?

FLOWER

Well, listen to this. Old Stone House, truth be told, is not mortgaged but is in a terrible state of neglect. The house is furnished with hundreds of idiotic inconveniences. My opinion is you should sell the house. To maintain a house is, as the Poles say, "more like a dream but no fun." Not only will you with your complete inexperience but even an expert will be in a pretty puddle... Are you picking out ties? You should take this black one, the one with the white oblique stripes. It's more sophisticated... The house is just rubbish, rotten dust. This stone construction, eaten from the inside by worms, is a two-story building, dating back to 1766, with crooked staircases and a kitchen. Blow on it and it will crumble. You just go look at it and I will be looking for a buyer

here, don't you worry. It's unlikely that you will find things of any value in that house. All is trash. There remains a small library but it will be of little interest to you. Most of the books are on occultism, theosophy and black magic... Are you a man of faith?

WISE

I am.

Flower, without turning around, nods his head back at the icon of Christ. And it must have been a cramp that got his neck from this movement because he grimaces as if in pain.

FLOWER

And you, such a fresh, sweet man, shouldn't deal and will be bored from this erratic and useless affairs. You better burn it down! Uh? Right, burn it. I speak out of a sense of personal, passionate sympathy for you. Do you promise me to burn it? Do you? All right? Well, give me, give me your word, lovely, kind Mr. Wise.

WISE

I give you my word.
I give it to you.

FLOWER

(makes a strange creaky sound)
Do me a favor. God!
Ugh...

WISE

Are you all right?

FLOWER

Nothing, nothing,
don't worry... Just
choked. Something
got into my throat.
Well, you seem to be
ready. So let's go
now. At the train
station, we still
have enough time to
have a little
breakfast and drink
a bottle for the
health of the new
owner of the house.
No, you go first.
I'll follow you.
Romanian style.
That's it.

EXT. CENTRAL STATION, NEW YORK, DAY

Flower puts Wise on the first-class car steps. At the last minute, an elegant, small wicker basket somehow appears in his hands. He gives it up into Wise's hands.

FLOWER

(smiling)
Please, accept this.
This is just ...
some food for the
road...

Some caviar,
grouses, veal,
butter, eggs and
other things. And a
couple of red
Mouton-Rothschilds.
Remember me kindly.
Wait for a telegram
from me... And if
need be, telegraph
for me here in NEW
YORK. Goodbye. I
don't want to burden
you with my
ridiculous standing
by the car. My
compliments.

INT. TRAIN CAR, DAY

Next to Wise sits another PASSENGER, who is also
headed to Washington.

PASSENGER

I want to tell you
about the beautiful
ladies I just met in
the dining car. All
big, beautiful, well
dressed, self-
confident - not a
bad one among them.
They laugh loudly,
use French words,
smell of harsh
perfume.

WISE

Just look at the
rivers, fields and
forests we're
passing by.
And the women at the
tables in the dining
car.

They are like
creatures from
another planet, they
arouse curiosity,
surprise and shy
realization of my
own awkwardness.

PASSENGER

Really!

WISE

We're moving now...

EXT. CENTRAL STATION, WASHINGTON, EVENING

Wise enters the square in front of the station and approaches the cabs. He explains to the CABMAN that he has to go to 3051 M Street. The cabman looks at him for some time with intent and arrogant curiosity.

CABMAN

That alchemist's
house? The one, who
died?

WISE

Yes, the Old Stone
House.

CABMAN

Are you a relative?

WISE

Yes, indeed I am...

EXT. THE COURTYARD IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE, NIGHT

The church CARETAKER, a small old man, no longer gray-haired but kind of greenish and hunched from rheumatism, is standing by the house. In his hands, he holds a big lamp and a bunch of huge rusty keys.

CARETAKER

Are you Mr. Wise?

WISE

Yes, I just arrived
from NEW YORK.

CARETAKER

We received a
telegram from your
lawyer. Here are the
keys to the house...

WISE

Help me open the
door...

The caretaker is tinkering with the keys. Covered with ancient rust, they barely go into the locks and don't want to turn in them. Finally, after much effort, the kitchen door gives way.

INT. OLD STONE HOUSE, NIGHT

Wise doesn't feel fear: the horror before the supernatural, the otherworldly is completely uncommon to his pure and healthy soul.

WISE

Oh, I have this
terrible headache
from the road and my
whole body is tired!
I feel curiosity and
a vague premonition
of an approaching
extraordinary event.

With a lamp in his hand, the caretaker and Wise go through all the rooms on the lower floor. We hear their footsteps that echo through the spacious deserted rooms.

CARETAKER

The wallpapers are
torn, they peeled
off and hang down
with large trembling
flaps. Everything's
warped, wrinkled
with time and makes
heavy, senile sighs,
grunting, mournful
squeaks...

WISE

The house needs
repairs.

CARETAKER

I will bring you tea
tomorrow...
Meanwhile, you can
get settled.

INT. OLD STONE HOUSE, SECOND FLOOR, NIGHT

Wise and the caretaker go to the second floor up the narrow spiral staircase. All the rooms are filled up and lined with household belongings: broken furniture, heaps of fabrics, chests, matting, baskets, bundles of old newspapers.

CARETAKER

Here's the bedroom.
It still has a
washbasin, a
dressing table and a
mirror wardrobe.

WISE

Oh, I see along the
wall a beautiful
antique Turkish sofa
upholstered in
buckskin leather -
so wide and long
that six or seven
people could lie
across it.

CARETAKER

And on the floor, is
a huge Turcoman
carpet of wonderful
red tones. Let's go
to the other room...

WISE

This room is
somewhat larger than
the bedroom. It
resembles a rare
amateur library, a
drafter's cabinet,
an alchemist's
laboratory and a
blacksmith's
workshop all at the
same time.

CARETAKER

There is a fireplace
built of massive
smoked brick: beside
it, on the side, on
a stand, there are
double bellows.

We see a round, three-legged table lined with
retorts, flasks, corks, crucibles, beakers,
thermometers, weights of all kinds and many other
instruments, the meaning and purpose of which Wise
simply cannot comprehend. The caretaker leaves.

INT. OLD STONE HOUSE, LIBRARY, NIGHT

WISE

Good, there's wood
in the fireplace.
I'm going to make a
fire. Interestingly,
many of the crystal
bottles filled with
powders and liquids
are labeled with

pictures of a dead
head or with the
Latin word
"venena..."

Wise lights the fireplace. He sees another table, ash-tree, large. It's a trestle table similar to ordinary drawing tables, which is piled with papyrus scrolls, notebooks, scribbled and written sheets of paper, compasses, rulers and books of all kinds.

WISE

As I see, books are everywhere: on chairs, on the floor and mostly on the oak shelves nailed along the walls in several floors where they stand and lie in utter disorder. All look old and serious, most of them have thick leather covers.

Two items on the ash table especially draw Wise's attention: a small, one-foot-long black wand; a golden snake with ruby eyes is wrapped several times around one of the ends; and a ball the size of a large apple from cast, dim glass or translucent stone that looks like jade or opal.

Wise picks up the wand. It feels like lead and is extremely cold to the touch. When Wise takes the ball in his hand, it amazes him how weightless it is.

A strange warmth emanates from it as if it's alive. Deep, in its very center, a strange, dense and, depending on the turns around the lamp, velvety green or dark purple tiny light burns in it. Putting the lantern on the table, Wise sinks into a deep vintage, soft leather chair. Takes one of the books, which is bound with bright red morocco and opens it.

WISE

Well. I don't want
to sleep. I'm going
to read something
interesting before I
go to bed... "To the
best of my modest
abilities, I will
continue this great
work that my teacher
and friend left me
in his will as an
invaluable gift,
1899."

With a respectful, anxious and sweet feeling, Wise leafs through the pages that are hard as cardboard and yellow like ivory. Many of his uncle's writings are encrypted. Wise finds the key after some time. It is not particularly common but not extremely difficult. Breaking the cipher entails nothing new.

However, after a few minutes, Wise's ability to uncover disguised messages still helps him. We see a book that has some text but also contains many strange recipes, complex drawings, mathematical and chemical formulas, scribblings, constellations and zodiac signs. Almost on every page, he comes across a drawing of two equal triangles, superimposed on each other in such a way that their bases lie opposite each other and their tops are one above, the other below and the whole figure is something like a six-pointed star with twelve intersection points. This drawing is called in his uncle's cipher just that, a "Solomon's star."

WISE

I can see that all
three of my
predecessors tried
to make some new
combination from the
letters included in
the names of these
ancient evil demons

– maybe a word,
maybe a whole phrase
– and arrange them
one by one at the
intersection of the
“Solomon’s star” or
in the triangles it
forms. I see traces
of these countless
but probably vain
attempts everywhere.
Three people
consistently, one
after another, for a
whole century,
worked to solve some
mysterious riddle.
One odd
circumstance,
though: no matter
how fantastically
the previous owners
of the book rebuilt
and glued the
letters, always and
inevitably two
syllables remained
in their work: “Sa-
tan.”

Wise approaches the fireplace.

WISE
(shouts loudly)
According to the
numbers theory,
millions of
combinations and
movements are
possible. The key to
the terrible formula
of Hermes
Trismegistus is
lost. And who lost
it?

The Great
Paracelsus? Or the
worldwide tramp and
adventurer
Cagliostro? We all
grope and only some
crazy circumstance
can come to the aid
of the lucky one. Or
has the will of the
wise disappeared
forever?

Wise takes the notebook out of his pocket. There's always an aniline pencil in it. Wise takes it out, wets it and with determination and inspiration writes on the first page the following:

"On April 26 of 19 **, I found this book in the Old Stone House. The work of the respected predecessors continues. Wise, the mathematics teacher."

WISE
And what's this?
Some three lines,
written very
unintelligibly with
a trembling hand, "I
feel like I have no
strength left. I'm
stopping my work.
All in vain! I'm
passing it on to the
next. The formula is
in the key. In the
formula, there's
strength. And in
strength, there's
power."

Wise opens the book at random, in the middle. It opens just where the strange bookmark lies: a thin yellowish tablet, a four-inch square with the "star of Solomon" carved on it; and many tiny squares from the same material; On each of them, a Latin letter is engraved and written with black lacquer.

Wise turns the book over, holding both spines, and shakes it hard. A few more small squares fall on the table with a quiet knock. Wise counts them: there are forty-four.

WISE

Strange. Is it possible that I am to discover that which was not given to three intelligent and educated people for a whole century? Well, I'll... try.

He moves closer to the table and leans over the tablet.

WISE

I feel like I'm all alone in the whole world! Here I sit with these little squares in a small, quiet, lighted place and life is somewhere far away, in the dark, in the past, in the future.

Wise folds and lines up in a column the names of these evil and bloodthirsty gods from the squares. We see exactly seven lines, one name in each.

Astoret

Asmodeus

Dagon

Hamman

Lucifer

Moloh

Velial

All forty-four squares are used and there is no longer any doubt that Wise is on the right path that began with his predecessors. We see how Wise puts all the same letters in piles. There are seventeen of them.

WISE

(thinks)

That's right again.
But the formula is only thirteen. Four extra. And how do I know if any letter repeats two or three times in the "star of Solomon?" There are only twelve points in the star, which means that the thirteenth and, I believe, the most important one, will go to the middle. If I start with the word "Satan," do I put "S" in the center of the inner hexagon? Indeed, uncle says a few pages back, "The title of the name of a powerful spirit combines the wisdom of a snake and the brilliance of the sun." Of course - "S."

We see how Wise puts this letter in the center of the hexagon and arranges the other letters on the sides - a, t, a, n. It's a good start but things don't go further and the dark instructions of his late uncle are of no use.

WISE

Or maybe, "Voco te,
Satanoe! Advoco te,
Satan! Veni hue,
Satana! No! I can
feel that it's
wrong. And what if I
look at the small
squares under light?
Of all the forty-
four squares that I
alternately bring to
the candle, thirteen
admit no light at
all! These are the
letters: a, a, e, f,
g, i, m, o, o, r, s,
t. And they also
include the letters
that make up the
terrible, wise, and
brilliant name
"Satan."

Now I need to decide
the fate of the
remaining eight
letters: e, g, i, m,
o, o, r, f.

We see Wise hiding the extra squares in his pocket, patiently and carefully moving the small squares along the points where the lines of the beautiful hexagonal shape with the snake-like "S" in the center intersect. He does this with his left hand and with his right, absently taps on the mysterious light ball with the black wand, which he took from the table. He is now convinced of the infinite combinations of the letters, syllables and words.

WISE

I will read along
the lines of the
"star of Solomon,"
right and left, top
and bottom,
clockwise and

counterclockwise.
Some unusual
fantastic words:
afit, onig, gano,
oft, ofir, mego,
argme, obhari,
tasef, nilono...

Continuing to tap the ball with the wand, Wise pronounces all the thirteen letters in any order possible for pronunciation.

WISE
(tries different combinations)
Tanorifogemas,
Morphogenatasi,
Rasatogominfe...

Wise's head is heavy. And suddenly... inspiration comes to him and his wavy hair straightens and stands on his head like a cold hedgehog's spikes.

WISE
(exclaims loudly and hits the
ball with the wand)
Afro-Amestigon!

A thin squeak comes from the table. Wise looks up and immediately straightens in amazement and horror. The strange ball begins to grow to the size of a watermelon. Inside the ball, some smoky, gray, thick clubs appear, like clouds during a thunderstorm. There's an ominous bloody glow, illuminating them from the inside with invisible fire. And on the ball, a huge black rat is standing on its hind legs. Its eyes are glowing with a blue phosphorus sheen.

And the whole rat face is strikingly similar to someone's very familiar face.

WISE
Heavens, that's
Flower!

From the open red mouth comes a mournful squeal.

WISE

(swings the stick and shouts
about the house)
Shoo! Damn rat. Go
away!
Afro-Amestigon!

The rat immediately disappears as if it melted. Instead, from the darkness, a huge GOAT with a quivering beard appears. He has bulging phosphoric eyes, his lips are moving, he's disgustingly and terribly similar to a human face. Disgusting and sharp smell of goat sweat fills the room.

GOAT

(threateningly bleats and
inclines his horns)
Baa!

WISE

(shouts in a frenzy)
Oh, so that's what
it's going to be?
Afro-Amestigon!

With all his strength, Wise throws the heavy stick into the goat's face. But misses. The blow hits the fireball. There's a terrible roar, like a powder cellar exploded. Dazzling flames rush to the ceiling. Sulfur suffocating hurricane breathes on Wise. He faints.

INT. OLD STONE HOUSE, BEDROOM, MORNING

Wise wakes up. A narrow ray of sunlight hits him on the eyes. He closes his eyes, sneezes, opens his eyes again and immediately feels so alive, so fresh, light and dexterous, as if his entire body has lost weight. As if someone has suddenly lifted a long-pressing weight from his chest and back, as if he has suddenly become a nine-year-old boy again when people are more inclined to flying than moving on the ground.

He is not at all surprised that he woke up dressed and lying not in the library but in the adjacent room on a wide suede sofa and that under his head, is an old satin pillow, embroidered with silk flowers that came from nowhere. But everything that happened to him yesterday in the alchemist's laboratory completely disappeared from his memory, as if someone washed off all the events of this strange and terrible night with a sponge. He only remembers how he came to the house in the evening, was left alone and tried to read some ancient book because he had nothing else to do. But he was dead tired and didn't know how he dragged himself to the couch...Wise quickly jumps up, runs up to the window, pushes back the heavy curtain and opens the fanlight. Green, azure and gold on a cool spring morning happily invade the stuffy room that hasn't been ventilated for years.

WISE

(thinks)

Ah, so good to be
alive! If only I
could have a cup of
tea... How do I get
it?

Immediately, a door creaks behind him. He turns back. The caretaker from yesterday enters the room with a teapot.

CARETAKER

Good morning! I see,
you had some good
sleep. The door was
left open. That is
what youth must feel
like. I've got a pot
of tea for you.
Wait, I'll bring it
now.

A minute later, he returns with a tray with tea-ware, some homemade white bread, generously sliced in thick chunks; there is also honey in a saucer, some cream and an old lemon, shriveled from time.

CARETAKER

I asked my neighbor
for the pot. And I
got the lemon from
the shopkeeper. I
know that young
people like to drink
tea with lemon. I
used to serve your
uncle. Yesterday I
forgot to tell you.
My mind is not what
it used to be.
Please, eat.

WISE

Come, sit down with
me. Give me a cup,
I'll pour some for
you.

CARETAKER

Thank you very much,
noble sir. I won't
refuse. If you'd
like something
stronger in the
morning, I can bring
that too. It's
close.
Oh, you don't want
it? Well, as you
wish.

Wise listens to the caretaker's chatter with a carefree, bright indifference. But little by little, he begins to smell the distant and then all the more noticeable smell of burning.

CARETAKER

Is something burning
here, sir?

WISE

I think so. I'll go
check.

INT. OLD STONE HOUSE, LIBRARY, MORNING

He goes to the library, accompanied by the caretaker. On the large table, an open book in red morocco binding is burning brightly and smoking.

CARETAKER

Come on, throw it
into the fireplace.
Let me.

Wise holds out his hand to prevent the caretaker from doing it.

WISE

Don't. We can put it
out.

But the book has already flown into the black fireplace and is burning merrily and turbulently.

CARETAKER

Just like that!
There it goes, to
hell.

WISE

That's true.

Wise turns his back to the fireplace. And at that very moment, he can't remember the hours he spent last night, bent over the red book. But for some reason, he suddenly becomes bored...

With the caretaker's help, he opens the swelled, rotten shutters in the hall and in the living room. In daylight, the spacious rooms appear in all their empty, unsightly and neglected form, which speaks of dirty, dreary, decaying old age. Throughout the corners, there are cobwebs, hanging in dark, wavering curtains, the smoky, cracked ceilings are black, the furniture is eaten by time and rats. Crooked and warped, it opens its insides from hair, matting and springs.

WISE

(shaking his head)
Well, this is just
clutter!

CARETAKER

That's true. If you
live here, you must
be careful. It may
fall apart any
minute. And there is
no use in repairing
it. Just better
build a new one.

Wise goes down the shaky, crumbling steps into the garden. But it's even sadder there. The oblivion, abandonment, wildness of the place feels even worse. A feeling of loneliness, fatigue and longing suddenly embraces Wise so much that he physically feels languor in his throat and chest. The room in NEW YORK presents itself to him in all the attractiveness of the usual familiar comfort.

WISE

(thinks)

Ah, it would be nice
to get home as soon
as possible. I won't
live here no matter
what. Why did I even
come to Washington?
Who needs this junk?

At that moment, he hears the bell on the way. Then comes the sound of wheels. Some cart stops at the gate of the house.

Wise hurries out to the alley. Towards him, is approaching the POSTMAN, a tall, thin young man, cheerful, very young. Red curly hair wildly grows from under his famously knocked down cap.

POSTMAN

(shouts while he walks)
Mr. Wise? Is that
you? You have a
telegram. Welcome to
Washington, sir!

Wise opens and unwraps the gray square package. The telegram is from Flower.

WISE

(reading aloud)
Leave immediately. I
found a buyer.
Hello. Flower.

Wise is struck by the strange circumstance that at first, he seems unable to understand who is telegraphing and with some effort, he remembers his lawyer. But the fact that his thoughts of selling the house so well coincided with the arrival of the telegram, do not surprise him at all and he doesn't even think about it.

WISE

I have to go back to
NEW YORK...

POSTMAN

Would you like to
come with me? I have
to go to the station
anyway. I have good
horses. And just in
time for the express
to NEW YORK.

CARETAKER

You didn't stay
long. Then again,
what can possibly be
your interest in
this place? Such a
young man from the
city...

Thank you very much,
noble sir... I'll
drink some to your
health... I wish you
success in your
deeds with all my
heart. May you
have...

WISE

Fine, fine. Wait,
I'll just grab my
suitcase and we'll
go!

Arriving at the central station, they both drink whiskey at the station restaurant, eat some delicious marinated catfish and feel that instant, unreasonable but strong friendly attraction, which is so understandable and charming when you're young.

Two passenger trains almost simultaneously approach the station from different directions. It is time to say goodbye. Wise firmly shakes the postman's hand, suddenly feeling an irresistible desire to give him something to remember him by but can't think of anything, except for his old cheap tombac watch with covers worn and green from time, ticking in his pocket.

INT. SALOON, WASHINGTON UNION STATION, MORNING

WISE

(thinks)

My watch isn't much
of a thing but still
a memory. And the
keychain with it,
the carnelian
engraving... you can
order the initial
letters of the name
and the last name or
the pierced heart to
be engraved...

Wise realizes that this cheap item can also be useful: on their way, the cheerful postman told him a hilarious story how the other day, he was showing some girls he knew a wonderful trick and smashed his steel anchor watch into pieces with a kitchen pestle.

WISE

(putting his fingers in his waistcoat pocket)
You are a wonderful companion. If I didn't have to go, we probably would have become friends. Please, accept this gift from me as a good memory... Here, this golden family chronometer with a diamond keychain...

POSTMAN

(laughs)
Oh! If you don't mind me having it, then I wouldn't refuse, that's for sure.

Wise goggles in amazement when with difficulty, he pulls into the light a huge, ancient, beautiful golden chronometer, the work of the excellent English master Norton. The spring is accidentally squeezed by matter and the watch melodiously begins to strike twelve. A black enamel ring with a small diamond glittering in the sun, like the purest dewdrop, is attached to the watch on a thin golden chain-ribbon.

POSTMAN

(babbling with embarrassment)
Sorry... such an expensive gift. I really don't feel I can take it.

But Wise is no longer surprised.

WISE

(thinks)

Must have taken
uncle's watch by
mistake. Anyway,
it's nothing...

Wise casually waves his hand...

WISE

(in a loud voice)

Take it. Take it, my
friend. I will be
happy to know that
this knickknack
gives you pleasure.

POSTMAN

(hesitates and is
confused)

It's time we say
goodbye. I have to
run for my leather
bag with the mail.

The young people once again firmly shake hands,
look into each other's eyes and for some reason,
suddenly kiss.

WISE

You are a wonderful
person. I wish that
you become a
postmaster as soon
as possible and
marry a beautiful,
rich and nice woman.

POSTMAN

(waves his hand)

Oh, I don't see that
happening.

Your first wish, if
it comes true, will
be about five years
from now. Then
again, one of the
chiefs in the city
must fall or die for
that to happen,
well, and I don't
wish anyone harm.
And the second,
alas, my friend, is
just as impossible
for me as becoming a
Chinese Emperor. To
you, my dear Mr.
Wise, of course, I
confess with full
confidence. There is
one girl here...
Polly, I think...
She struck me in the
heart. At Christmas,
I danced with her
and even managed to
tell her about my
feelings. But who am
I and who is she?
Her father is a
lumberman, a rich
man. What am I for
her? However, she
did listen to me and
seemed to be just as
interested. She
said, "Have
patience, maybe, I
will be able to
influence my father.
Wait, she said, I'll
let you know." But
April is ending...
Of course, she
forgot all about me.
A woman's memory is
short.

Oh, need to stop
thinking about her.
And I wish you a
happy journey... I
wish you all the
best. Now I need to
go, run.

Wise enters the car. The window is closed. Lowering it, Wise notices just opposite himself, in the open window of a standing oncoming train, three steps away, a charming woman. Softly and vividly, like in a picture, the dark background behind her highlights her elegant spring white hat with pink flowers, her light gray silk coat, her pink, blooming, tender, charming face and a huge bouquet of fresh, barely blooming lilac, picked just this morning, which the woman is holding with both hands.

INT. TRAIN CAR, MORNING

WISE

(thinks)

How nice she is! So
much tenderness,
purity, brains,
kindness, grace.
There is no one like
her anywhere in the
whole world! There
are many beauties
but she is the only
one, who is not like
anyone, she's
unique. Ah, she's
smiling!

True. She's smiling but only slightly, with her eyes alone, and in that subtle smile, there is both innocent coquetry and caress, and joy she feels about her health and spring day, and young prankish fun. She plunges her nose, lips and chin into the flowers.

WISE

(mentally exclaims)
If only she gave one
flower to me!

And the beautiful woman throws the bouquet into the open window to Wise with extraordinary agility and amazing dexterity. He manages to catch it and even, leaning out of the window, presses it to his lips several times for her to see.

But the beauty, laughing so merrily that her teeth begin to sparkle in the brilliance of the spring afternoon, tilts her head as a sign of farewell and quickly disappears into the window. And there her car blunts, dims, merges into the lines of other cars and disappears. Wise's car begins moving too.

The door rattles. The same postman rushes into the car. His cap fell off to the back of his head, red curls are burning with fire, his face is red and beaming.

In a strong excitement, he begins squeezing Wise's hands.

POSTMAN

My dear friend... if
only you knew...
What? Is the train
moving? Eh, to hell
with work. They made
me sweat... They'll
wait one day... I'll
take you to the
first station...
This day will never
happen again... If
you had known... No,
you are truly a
magician, a wizard,
a sorcerer and a
soothsayer. You're
just like some
wonderful kind
sorcerer from old
fairy tales...

WISE

Please, speak out properly. I don't understand you.

POSTMAN

Yes, of course!
Listen to this.
Saying goodbye, you told me, "I wish you became a postmaster." Right? Remember?

WISE

I remember.

POSTMAN

And then, "I wish you success with one beautiful young lady, who and so on... Right?

WISE

Well, yes.

POSTMAN

And so, imagine... like magic, I accept the bag but it's already old and rotten and suddenly it opens up. A whole pile of letters crawls out. I pick them up. And suddenly I see two at once. And both are for me. Look, just look.

He gives him two envelopes. One is gray and from the post office, the other is small, purple, with neat handwriting.

WISE

Is there something
in these letters
like... something
that I shouldn't
know?

POSTMAN

You? You? You are
allowed everything!
You are my
benefactor. Look!
Read it!

Wise reads. The first package is from NEW YORK. In it, the traveling postman is really appointed as the chief of the post and telegraph office in Washington DC to be the deputy postmaster instead of the one, who fell ill. And in the purple letter, on green paper with two kissing blue-eyed doves on the first page, in the upper left corner, diligently deduced in a rolling down handwriting, just five lines without any addressee, dictated by ingenious hope and naive encouragement.

WISE

(returning the letters)
Very good. I'm truly
happy for you.

POSTMAN

And I'm immensely
happy! Eh, now I
would like to have
some whiskey. I
would treat with
pleasure a dear
friend with the last
five. Mr. Wizard,
how do we do this?

WISE

Well. I wouldn't
mind that too.

And at the same moment, there's a knock on the door. A WAITER appears in a blue jacket with gold buttons.

WAITER

Will you have
breakfast?

WISE

Here's what, we'll
have breakfast, of
course. For now give
us... Give us a
bottle of champagne
and some of your
better caviar and
pickled mushrooms.

WAITER

All right, sir.

POSTMAN

I told you that you
are a magician. If
you want music now,
then there will be
music. Please order.
After all, your
every desire comes
true.

Wise turns pale. His heart sinks from some kind of painful secret fear.

WISE

(in a weak, trembling voice)
Fine. Let there be
music.

A sweet guitar sound is heard in the aisle. Two throaty, hoarse but very pleasant and true voices, male and female, sing the Italian song, "O sole mio..." The postman looks out the compartment.

POSTMAN

Travelling
musicians! Well, you
are one lucky man,
sir. It's like
magic.

Wise doesn't answer to him.

WISE

(thinks)

The postman is right
- my every wish
comes true almost
instantly. When I
woke up, I wanted
tea - the caretaker
brought tea. I
thought - and
fleetingly - that it
would be nice to get
rid of the house - a
telegram came from
Flower. I wanted to
leave - the postman
offered a cart and
horses. I jokingly
said, "I give you
the chronometer" -
and took out of my
pocket an expensive,
antique gold watch
that belongs to
someone, I don't
know to whom. Having
instantly fallen in
love with the
beauty from the car
window, I wanted to
get a flower from
her bouquet - and
received so sweetly
and unexpectedly the
whole bouquet with
an air kiss and a
seductive smile into

the bargain. By
chance, out of
simple courtesy, I
promised the postman
a promotion and a
desired wedding and
fate already
indulges his whim.
And now, in the car,
two smaller things
in a row....
Something bad is
contained in this
obedient haste of
chance...

POSTMAN

Why are you so
gloomy?

WISE

Warm champagne with
caviar don't taste
good...

INT. DINING CAR, MORNING

Wise and the postman are eating fish. Wise is tired of the redheaded postman: he is too talkative, sugary and familiar. The postman, having pierced a good piece of zander sirloin with a knife, is already bringing it to his open mouth.

WISE

(thinks
lazily to
himself)
If only you just
went somewhere to
hell.

The postman, quickly clanging his teeth, closes his mouth, puts the knife with the fish on the plate, turns green in his face, obediently stands up.

POSTMAN

Excuse me a moment.

The postman runs out of the car. And no longer returns.

After returning to his car after breakfast, Wise will test his new, exclusive, mysterious ability several times.

INT. TRAIN CAR, MORNING.

Wise thinks the train is too slow on the climb.

WISE

(thinks)

Come on, speed it
up!

The train overcomes the mountain but it turns out that, as if obeying someone's command, it immediately begins to rattle its wheels and steps on it.

WISE

(continues)

More. And even more.
Come on!

Soon the telegraph poles flash in the window at a speed of first three, then two, then one and a half seconds; the cars, like drunks, stagger from side to side. The TRAIN is beeping to the fullest power. In the cars, the windows rattle, the couplings screech, the buffers rumble. In the corridor and in the neighboring compartments, anxious voices of men and cries of women are heard.

WISE

(is frightened and thinks)

No, that's too
much. I don't want
us to crash. Go
slower, please.

STEAM TRAIN

S-u-u-u-r-e!

The train, puffing like a running giant, begins to slow down.

WISE

Good, I like it
more.

The PORTER knocks on the door.

PORTER

After the train had passed through the ascent, something got damaged in the air brake and at the same time, something happened either with the siphon or with the regulator.

WISE

So easy.

PORTER

But you shouldn't worry about that.

The train passes quite close by a church under construction. At the dome of its bell tower, near the cross itself, a man is doing some kind of work.

WISE

(thinks to himself)
What if he falls?

Wise sees that the man has suddenly lost support and begins to glide helplessly down the curved, shiny side of the dome, frantically clinging to the smooth metal. Another moment - and he will fall over.

WISE

(shouts loudly in horror,
covers his face with his
hands)

Don't, don't!

But immediately opening them, he sighs with joyful relief. The worker managed to cling to something and now it is clear that he is lying on the dome, holding with both hands the rope that is running from the base of the cross.

The train speeds on and the church disappears around the corner.

WISE

(asks himself)

Did I really want to see him die? No, of course, I didn't wish death or injury to this poor man. I don't even know him. The most fragile thing in the world is life... Every day it goes to pieces, never to happen again. Every hour is unique, every moment is different from the previous one. Treasure those, who give you their time, their warmth and their love. You will not have another opportunity to do this.

With shame and fear, Wise thinks about the bloody madness that will have swept the whole world if all human desires have the ability to be instantly fulfilled.

INT. TRAIN DINING CAR, DAY

Wise looks out the window. A GENERAL sits at the next table.

GENERAL
(yelling at the footman)
What did you give
me? This is not
sturgeon soup. This
is stellate
sturgeon!

This scene makes a depressing and dreary impression on everyone. Particularly disgusting is the fact that while shouting the general continues champing.

WISE
(thinks)
If only you'd shut
up!

The general instantly leans back in his chair with his mouth open, groaning in pain. His face is blue and his eyes are full of blood and bulging.

GENERAL
Can't breathe.

WISE
(thinks)
Oh, damn it, no, let
him be all right!

The footman quickly, deftly and loudly slaps the general's neck.

The general stretches his neck up, gulps, takes a breath and turns around with a bewildered, joyful look. The color of his face is also back to normal.

GENERAL
Go and make sure
this is the last
time! Or...

WISE

(thinks)

Again... and Again.
It's so easy.
Obviously, I got
into some
ridiculously long
series of events
that happen to match
my desires. I heard
about people, who
got into railway
accidents and
shipwrecked on the
same day. There are
lucky people, who
never lose in
cards... They say
it's a lucky streak.
So I must have
something like that
happening to me too.

INT. TRAIN CAR, EVENING.

Wise is alone in his compartment.

WISE

Well, one more time.
First of all, I want
there to be light
right now. And
secondly, I want to
have a bottle of "Ed
Pinaud" here.

At that very moment, the porter enters with a candle on a long holder. He lights the gas in the round glass lantern.

PORTER

(with a kind smile)
Here, sir, would you
like...

I was cleaning the
car this morning and
found this bottle.
Some ladies must
have left it. It
seems like some kind
of toilet water. We
don't need it. Maybe
you want it?

WISE

Give it to me!

Wise looks at the green with gold label of the
crystal bottle.

WISE

(reads aloud in Latin)
Muguet, Pinaud,
Paris.

He carefully opens the thin membrane that covers
the glass stopper. Sniffs. Yes, it is exactly what
he was thinking about.

WISE

(thinks)
Well, that's some
lucky streak.
But that's enough. I
don't want it
anymore, I'm sick of
it. Now I would like
some stupid book and
sleep, sleep, sleep.
Sleep without dreams
and any other
nonsense. To hell
with witchcraft. I
can go crazy like
that.

WISE

Do you have, by any
chance, some book I
can borrow?

PORTER

As a matter of fact,
yes, I have one. But
you probably won't
read it. "Martin
Eden" by Jack
London. If you like,
I will give it to
you with pleasure.

WISE

Then bring me your
"Martin Eden" and
make my bed.

He gladly lies down on the fresh sheets and begins
to read.

WISE

(reading aloud)
"The world belongs
to the strong - to
the strong, who are
noble as well and
who do not wallow in
the swine-trough of
trade and exchange.
The world belongs to
the true nobleman,
to the great blond
beasts, to the
noncompromisers, to
the yes-sayers. And
they will eat you
up, you socialists -
who are afraid of
socialism and who
think yourselves
individualists. Your
slave-morality of
the meek and lowly
will never save
you..."

Wise's eyes close, sleep gently and sweetly clouds his head. The last spark of consciousness flashes in his memory like a dark car window and in it, under a white hat a pink tender face, dark, lively eyes and whiteness of teeth, sparkling in a sly and sweet smile.

WISE

(whispers)

I want to see her
tomorrow.

INT. TRAIN CAR, MORNING.

The first thing he sees when he wakes up late in the morning is Alba Flower, who is sitting in front of him on the sofa with a newspaper in his hand.

FLOWER

Good morning, my
dear client.

WISE

(thinks)

I saw him somewhere.
Before this, before
the first meeting,
and now, quite
recently. And what a
nasty hand he has
when you shake it.
It's hard and dry
like a hoof. And he
smells of sulfur.
And his face is...
like he's not even
human!

FLOWER

Did you rest well? I
didn't want to wake
you up. You've been
sleeping like a
baby.

WISE

How did you get on
the train?

FLOWER

Well, I left three
stations back to
meet you. I miss
you, damn it! And I
have a whole bunch
of things to do with
you. However, go
wash quickly. Only
half an hour is
left. I will get us
some tea.

For a long time, while washing, Wise can't overcome some strange feelings: irritation, annoyance and that previous, familiar, unclear premonition of trouble.

WISE

(ponders, looking at himself
in the mirror)

Who is this
mysterious man? So
our paths have
crossed and they
don't uncross
anymore... What is
it? Am I really
afraid of him? Not
at all. But I will
still be nice to
him. After all, I
owe him a lot.
Therefore, I
shouldn't be sour.
The world is great,
life is beautiful,
washing is
refreshing and you
may not be an actor
but still better
than the devil, you

are young and
healthy and you
don't wish anyone
harm and the whole
future is ahead of
you. Go drink tea.

In the corridor, facing the open window, stands a slender girl in a light-gray long silk blouse and white hat. She turns to Wise. He stops in joyful embarrassment. Before him, is yesterday's STRANGER, who threw the flowers into his car. He sees how a scarlet healthy blush touches her beautiful face and how the wind picks up and quickly twists a thin strand of hair over her temple. For a few seconds, both look at each other, unable to find words. She speaks first and what a flexible, warm, very special voice she has that flows right into his heart!

BEAUTIFUL STRANGER

I must beg your
forgiveness...
Yesterday I allowed
myself... such a
rampant... boyish
vagary...

WISE

Oh, please, just
don't apologize...
I'm to blame for
everything. I looked
at your flowers and
thought: if I had at
least a sprig! And
you were so generous
that you gave a
whole bunch.

BEAUTIFUL STRANGER

Imagine that I
thought you wanted
it too. I just
somehow
involuntarily...
just did it. I don't
know why.

WISE

Let me thank you
from the bottom of
my heart... It's
spring, a sunny day
and the first lilac
from your hands...
I'm in your debt
forever...

BEAUTIFUL STRANGER

I can imagine how
frightened you
were... Probably,
thought that I ran
away from a
madhouse.

WISE

Not at all. It was
such a sweet,
beautiful and...
regal gesture. I
will save the
bouquet forever as a
memory of a short
but wonderful
meeting. By the way,
I still don't
understand how you
got into this train.
After all, you were
leaving in a
different
direction...

The girl laughs merrily.

BEAUTIFUL STRANGER

Ah, I did an
incredibly stupid
thing. Imagine, in
Washington, I got
into the wrong
train.

Then I instantly
grabbed my bag, ran
out to the platform
and jumped on the
move... And sat
here... And in the
morning you... If
you knew how
confused I was when
I saw you.

WISE

But what a careless
thing to do... jump
out on the move.
Anything could have
happened.

BEAUTIFUL STRANGER

Oh! I'm agile... and
then, what's meant
to happen, will
happen...

WISE

But do you know that
when I went to bed
last night, I
thought that I would
certainly see you in
the morning. Isn't
it strange?

BEAUTIFUL STRANGER

No, I wouldn't
believe that... In
any case, our
fleeting meeting,
albeit ridiculous,
is not an ordinary
one...

FLOWER

(under his breath)
So let me introduce
you to each other.

A barely perceptible grimace of displeasure runs across the beauty's face.

WISE

Ah, it's you, Alba
Flower... What a
surprise!

FLOWER

Emily SHORT.

SHORT

(warmly, like a man
shakes hands with Wise)
And this is the
omniscient and all-
knowing monsieur
Flower.

FLOWER

Come drink tea with
us, they will take
it away.

SHORT

I won't drink tea.

FLOWER

Emily is the only
daughter of a famous
banker in NEW YORK,
a philanthropist and
patron of the arts.
She graduated a year
ago, she's a
mathematician. She
lives completely
independently,
chooses her
acquaintances and
accepts anyone she
wants, regardless of
the circle of her
father's friends and
connections.

Always healthy and cheerful, like a fish in the water or a bird on a branch. She won't allow anyone to step on her feet but is kind like an angel and responsive to human grief. Amazing rider, superbly shoots from a pistol, a musician, a wonderful comedian on amateur performances and so on and so forth.

WISE

Are you a mathematician?

SHORT

I love cryptography...

FLOWER

Wise is a brilliant young man, who has decided to exchange the narrow career of a school mathematics teacher for exchange activities. He went to Washington to inspect the house he had inherited from his uncle. Possesses outstanding abilities in the field of cryptography. A little artist and a poet... Life and soul of any company...

He likes applied
mathematics, as well
as occult sciences.

All this is like some kind of obsessive
matchmaking. Wise bites his lips and fidgets in his
place.

SHORT

I'm very glad to
meet you and I hope
to see you again...
Do you have a
notebook? Write down
my address in NEW
YORK, I accept at
about five on
Thursdays. Come see
me when you have
time and desire. I'd
really like that.

Wise bows. He still notices that she doesn't invite
Flower.

WISE

(thinks)

She must feel about
him like I do. Her
heart's not in it,
she doesn't like
this man with empty
eyes.

They arrive at the station. A warm shake of the
hand, a gentle, bright and kind look and then the
white hat with pink flowers disappears into the
crowd.

FLOWER

(narrowing one eye)
Like her? She is a
real bride...
Beautiful and
educated, sweet and
rich...

WISE
(in a rude voice)
Enough!

Flower meekly falls silent. He is carrying the bag.

WISE
I need a car.

FLOWER
Now. Driver! We need
to go to Manhattan:
Hotel Bartholdi, 956
Broadway at 23rd
Street.

INT. INSIDE THE CAR, MORNING

Flower starts talking about business.

FLOWER
Don't be angry with
me for selling the
house without your
permission. Such a
true and brilliant
business on the
stock exchange turns
up once in a century
and it would be a
shame to refuse it.
I risked the entire
proceeds and doubled
it in two days.
However, the risk
here was one in ten
thousand.

WISE
You did everything
right....

FLOWER

I think that the room now is not at all for a person with such a substantial sum of money. Therefore, I took the liberty to transport the most necessary things of my dear client to the best hotel in the city. This, of course, is only for now. Tomorrow, you can find yourself a cozy, little apartment with four or five rooms, furnish it to your liking, buy some carpets, flowers, paintings, all sorts of trinkets and create a nice nest.

WISE

I have noticed that you have a surprisingly delicate taste and the ability to buy cheap "real" things.

FLOWER

Today we will go together to the only decent tailor in the city. But if you want to dress the best and with great chic, then you need to go to England. You should order undergarments and costumes for men

only in London but
ties and hats - in
Paris. But this is
for later. Now we
need to make strong
and weighty
connections in high
society. And then
it's Petersburg,
London, Paris,
Biarritz, Nice...
I'm telling you, we
will conquer the
whole world!

He talks and Wise listens to him with a casual,
indulgently distant look.

INT. HOTEL BARTHOLDI, RESTAURANT PRIVATE ROOM,
MORNING

They finish their light and expensive breakfast.

FLOWER

(to the footman)
We don't need
anything else yet.
If we need you, I'll
call.

When the footman is gone, Flower closes the door
behind him. Then he returns to the table, sits down
on his chair with his knees against Wise, bends
over the table, almost lies down on it and cups his
chin in his hands.

FLOWER

(in a hoarse and weak voice)
And the word? Did
you recognize the
word?

WISE

I don't understand.
What word?

FLOWER

I implore you, say
the word... Just say
the word and I'm
your servant, your
slave forever...

WISE

(thinks)

There... in the
house... that book
... the formulas...
the red binding...
Mephistopheles...

Wise's face goes cold and his lips are dry.

WISE

I don't know... I
cannot... I don't
know how...

Flower sinks to the floor and on all fours, like a dog crawls over to Wise and, grabbing his hands, begins to cover them with scratchy kisses.

FLOWER

The word, the word,
the word...
Remember, remember
the word!

WISE

(closes his eyes for a second)
Leave me be, I don't
need this. Do you
hear me? I don't
want it!

Flower rises and with his back to Wise, staggering, walks to the corner of the room. There he stands motionless for about two seconds.

FLOWER

(exclaims with a devilish
grimace)

To hell with it! I'm
drunk as a hog.
Forget my nonsense -
and to hell with it!
I apologize. But
still... just this
one, the simplest
request, which won't
cost you a thing.

WISE

Fine. Tell me.

FLOWER

(puts his hand in his pocket
and pulls it out clenched into
a fist)

What is in my hand?

WISE

(with a smile)
A small golden coin.

FLOWER

What's on it?

WISE

Wait... here it
goes. A woman's head
in profile, turned
to the right of the
viewer... Bare
neck... Evil dry
face. Thin lips,
prominent chin,
sharp nose. Puffy
curls, in them a
small crown at the
top of the hair...

FLOWER

Ehm... yes. You're right. That's an old silver coin from seventeen thirty-nine. Yes, right. Would you like some more champagne?

It is from this very day that Wise's brilliant success begins in the big NEW YORK community. In a short time, Wise becomes a magnificent tale of the city. Rumors increase the size of his inheritance to tens of millions of dollars.

Curious people walk with their mouths open after him. He is shown to visitors like the eighth wonder of the world. They almost daily write in newspapers about his eccentricities, his generosity and happiness. Needless to say that around him immediately, by itself, a noisy retinue of friends, acquaintances, hangers-on, beggars, talkers and amusers is formed.

Wise, without losing at all the kindness and modesty inherent in him, very quickly learns the hard art of owning people. It is enough for him to slowly, casually look into the eyes of an arrogant insolent or intrusive extortionist and just think a little.

WISE

(thinking)

I don't want to see you ever again.

The insolent person instantly moves away somewhere to the background, turns pale, fades and forever, irrevocably dissolves, disappears into space.

Flower stubbornly returns to him, although Wise very often leads him away with a mental order. It happens in those moments when, suddenly turning around, Wise suddenly catches the lawyer's greedy, imploring, hypnotizing look. "The word! Say the word!" shout his miserable and menacing, empty eyes.

Wise inwardly utters, "Go away." Flower all wilts and leaves, shamefully resembling a smart, nervous, old dog, which, after being yelled at, crouches on all four paws, hunches back, hides its tail between its legs and crawls away, looking back with hurt, guilty eyes.

But a day later, an hour later, again, as if nothing has happened, he appears before Wise with the news of a colossal victory on the stock exchange, with a briefcase full of fresh, just printed crisp bills, with a trendy spicy joke, with an amazing or flattering acquaintance offer, with a whole choice of new entertainment.

Flower looks after Wise like a nanny, a jealous wife or a diligent detective. If he could, he would listen closely whether Wise would mumble anything in his sleep.

Wise's every desire is fulfilled almost instantly as if invisible, deft hands and quiet, fast legs really serve him dutifully. But there's no miracle here. Just an eternal, uninterrupted and very simple coincidence of thoughts and events.

INT.HOTEL BARTHOLDI, ROOM CABINET, MORNING

Wise looks out the window at the pigeons flying high in the sky and envies their light beautiful movements.

WISE

(thinks)

Oh, if a man could
experience something
like that!

Someone knocks at the door.

FLOWER

(holding a newspaper)
Today the Wright
brothers' airplane
is going to fly.

WISE
(reading
the news)
I want to fly...

FLOWER
They are already
waiting for us...

And that same evening, for a crazy amount of money, Wise climbs behind the pilot on the heavy, clumsy Farman No. 4 and makes two laps over the field, having experienced for ten minutes one of the purest, most delightful and proud sensations that are available to a man in his heavy earthly life.

Whenever he wants, he can hear the music or the scent of flowers that is coming from nowhere.

INT. INSIDE THE CAR, MORNING

FLOWER
They are waiting for
you at the racetrack
today!

WISE
I'm not interested
in horses...

FLOWER
And what about all
the beautiful girls,
who will be there?
Are you interested
in them?

INT. HOTEL BARTHOLDI, ROOM CABINET, DAY

Slowly shuffling across the floor, Wise sees a big painting on the wall, showing a nude woman on horseback — a story that makes him stop and be surprised at the brightness and unusualness of what is happening.

WISE

Where did I get this painting?

FLOWER

I bought it at the auction. "Lady Godiva" - painted by John Collier. That's his most famous work.

WISE

And who is depicted on the painting? What's the story behind this?

FLOWER

One of the most beautiful legends of old England. Lady Godiva was the wife of Leofric, Count of Mercia, who lived in the English city of Coventry in the eleventh century. These were the times when one of the powerful kings of England, Edward the Confessor, was reigning. He's also known for his exorbitant taxes, which he imposed on his subjects. Leofric also had the right to levy a tax on the residents of his city. More than once, the devastated citizens asked the count to ease their situation but this

didn't give any
result. Lady Godiva
was known for her
generosity and piety
and also often
begged her husband
to be merciful and
lower the fees but
her prayers didn't
reach him. To her
regular request, the
angry count promised
to lower the taxes
if she did something
crazy. He said,
"Walk through the
city naked and I
will cancel the
taxes..."

WISE

All Lady Godiva has
is her precious
golden-brown hair,
with which she
covers her chest. I
see how she modestly
lowered her head but
there's no
humiliating shame or
fear in this gesture
- only gentleness
and determination at
the same time... Did
he cancel the taxes?

FLOWER

Leofric lowered them
but didn't cancel
them. Yes but pay
attention to the
horse! The horse is
walking along a
deserted medieval
city along the
gothic arches, which

contrasts sharply
with the naked rider
- she has a royal
blanket, embroidered
with gold and a rich
saddle.

WISE

I want to have such
a horse!

FLOWER

As you wish!

WISE

But the main part of
the canvas is the
rider... The artist,
unlike other
painters and
sculptors, only
depicted Godiva's
silhouette, avoiding
details of her body.

FLOWER

In many ways, this
has been achieved
thanks to the full
profile view. The
artist even puts his
heroine in the
saddle of the male
type, so as not to
allow to see too
much. The outlines
of the countless
resemble Gothic s-
shaped figures with
their grace and
flexibility.

WISE

A naked, young, slim
woman on horseback
means striving for
beauty, restraint
and closeness to
nature.

FLOWER

The content of the plot plays a special role: the sacrifice of the countess, her moral purity in front of herself and all the people, despite the tyranny and cruelty of her husband. Humility and beauty break insensitivity - this is the main idea of this painting.

WISE

Absolute nudity is a symbol of "bare truth" that made the count wince and surrender and the townspeople lower their eyes and close the shutters. What looks like sin and temptation in the eyes of hypocrites, will be the driving force for all those, who are pure.

EXT. RACETRACK TRIBUNE, DAY

We hear the sound of the bell and we see eleven horses, which are being brought into the circle one after another. Wise stands at the barrier, next to the tall shaven gentleman, Max CAIN, who, with a look of outward indifference, is smoking a cigar but all the while nervously bites it. Wise hears someone say his name but can't make it out, as is always the case with quick, casual acquaintances.

CAIN

Who're you betting
on?

WISE

Just a minute, I
have to think.

Behind him, the MAN FROM THE CROWD is weighing the odds.

MAN IN THE CROWD

The Englishman in
the black paddock
jacket with white
sleeves will have to
come first, the
second - the negro
all in red, who's
showing his white
teeth. The whole
game in the
sweepstakes is on
the two of them. For
the third place, we
expect two more
horses but they are
not interesting.

The jockeys are sitting slightly hunched, carelessly and beautifully in the saddles, on short stirrups, with their legs sharply bent at the knees. After all the other horses, a golden-red mare, not particularly tall but in great shape, passes with a considerable gap and in great disarray, under a jockey in a blue jacket with white stars. She is hot and doesn't want to obey the rider. Her ears are moving nervously, turning to the jockey, then forward, the hair is shining with sweat, foam is falling from the bit and sunlight is shining with sharp light in her big, convex, black eyes without the whites.

From gallop she goes to a trot, dances on the spot, jumps sideways and tries to pull out the reins with sharp movements of her beautiful dry head.

WISE

I'll bet on this
one... She will come
first.

MAN IN THE CROWD

(notices mockingly but in a
low voice)
It is true as in a
state bank.

CAIN

(raises his dark-black
eyebrows, puts his cigar away
at a long distance with two
fingers, whistles slightly)

Satanella?

Amaaazi... I can
assure you that
she's not going to
come first or second
or at any place. She
is not in her
element and not in
shape and not in the
right hands. Who is
sitting on her? That
Tatar boy, Kazum.
Last year he was
just a stable boy...
I don't care but
you're just throwing
money to the winds.

Wise beckons Flower with one finger.

WISE

Put on this...
what's her name...
that red one... Blue
shirt with the
stars.

FLOWER
Satanella, number
eleven.

WISE
Yes, yes.

FLOWER
How much should I
bet on her?

WISE
Doesn't matter.
Well, ten dollars...
fifteen... Just bet
as much as you want.

FLOWER
(bows and runs to the money
box)
Yes, sir!

CAIN
Stop it... This is
ama-a-a... But
listen to me. I
don't feel sorry for
your money but I see
that you are new to
the races.

WISE
This is my first
time.

CAIN
You see? Well, I
understand trying
your luck, relying
on blind crazy
happiness... But you
need there to be at
least one chance in
a million... And
here it's ab-so-lute
zero!

Betting on Satanella
is as ridiculous as,
for example, betting
on a horse that
doesn't participate
in this race at all,
which is not even
present in the
entire program
today, which does
not exist in this
world at all... you
see, it has not been
born yet.

WISE

(objects merrily)
However, she is
here. And she will
come first.

CAIN

(croaks a reply)
Surprisi-i-i... Were
we introduced?
Right? Have you
taken the tickets
already? Have you?
Not only did I not
get you into this
vile enterprise but
I even held you
back, right? Well,
let me tell you that
I have the
misfortune of being
the owner of this
water cart. Look,
no, you just look at
the program. You
see: number eleven -
Satanella ... owner:
Max Cain. This is
us. And we're
telling you that she
has no place.

WISE

She will come first.

CAIN

(shrugs)

I just don't un-der-stand you. Well, if you want that now I am betting a hundred dollars against your ten that she will not take a single paid place, that is, she won't be the first, the second, or the third.

WISE

(shakes his head)

No, I don't want that. One hundred against a thousand that she will take the first prize. I don't need you to indulge me.

CAIN

But I don't want to win for sure. And for the fact that she won't come first, I'm ready to put a thousand dollars against a hundred. Right now!

WISE

(abruptly)

And I'm not putting some fantastic thousands but real material five thousand against your one. Your Satanella will come first.

We see that the horses under their respective jockeys go back in a group to the former line from where they begin the trial gallop.

CAIN

(good-naturedly)

Let's not be angry.
See for yourself the
shape that mare is
in. It's taking her
nowhere. But in her
veins there is blood
of the Galtimore
stallion and her
price, if sold, is
three thousand. I
take this amount and
bet against your
three that she will
be neither the first
nor the second.

WISE

She's going to come
first.

CAIN

(shrugs again)

Fine. But we also
make an intermediate
condition that
reconciles us. If
she comes third or
none, then I win. If
she's first, then
you win. And if she
arrives the second,
then it's neither
you nor me and then
we will put in half
three thousand in
favor of the Red
Cross. Deal?

WISE

(smiles)

Agreed.

CAIN

And grea-a-a...

Five times, they fail to let the horses free in a heap. Confused, hot, puffing Satanella that backs or leans sideways on the others messes with all the other horses.

MAN IN THE CROWD

Remove that
Satanella! That damn
mare is completely
exhausted!

For the sixth time, the horses go comparatively well, squeeze before the start and suddenly go forward with such speed that it douses the nearby spectators with wind. The white flag raised high in the starter's hand quickly drops to the ground.

FLOWER

Such a line at the
boxes that I barely
got out. I
congratulate you,
not a single ticket
for the eleventh
number in the boxes.
All clear!

By its surprising twists and absurdity, this race is the only one that the gray haired experts and fans of race sports have ever seen on the racetrack.

MAN IN THE CROWD

Watch! One of the
two general
favorites, the negro
Scipion, was thrown
off by his horse at
the very first turn
and at the same time
kicked to the head.

FLOWER

The poor man was
half-dead when they
carried him away on
a stretcher.

MAN IN THE CROWD

Horrible. Some
jockey in a crimson
paddock jacket with
a green ribbon over
his shoulder fell
with his horse.

FLOWER

He got off safely
and, deftly leaping
up, managed to catch
the reins. The horse
won't let him sit in
the saddle... the
third rider's girth
burst...

MAN IN THE CROWD

And what is this?
Two riders clashed
into each other so
badly that they
couldn't continue
the race. One
sprained his arm and
the other broke a
rib.

Almost all the horses and jockeys suffer some fatal and evil accidents. By the end of the second minute, after the last turn, the audience frantically stretches to the left with their eyes, heads and bodies.

We see that in the front, in a straight line, confidently and calmly, the Englishman with black and white sleeves is riding. He is without a whip and occasionally turns back. Behind him, we see Satanella. She's behind him by forty lengths.

We see the jockey, who is almost lying on her stretched neck. He's working with his left hand in circles with the reins and often gushes the horse with the riding crop with his right.

Wise was never a player and isn't afraid of losing: money has long become something of garbage for him.

WISE

(shouts in thought)
Satanella, you
should be the first!

MAN IN THE CROWD

Something strange's
happened! Satanella
approaches the
Englishman and
flashes past him
like a whirlwind.
Now, after her, the
black stallion
passes him too.

FLOWER

The Englishman's
horse completely
stopped... The right
front leg... It is
broken below the
knee. Having pierced
the skin, white
bloodied bone sticks
out.

No one applauds Satanella. Whistling and angry shouts are heard from the tribune.

FLOWER

Congratulations.

WISE

Go to hell!

CAIN

(taking out his wallet)
Your luck comes from
the devil. I don't
envy you. Here, take
this.

WISE

Yes, I actually...
don't... I'm just
this... so... why
should I?

CAIN

(shouts)
What? You don't need
it? Wha-a-a-t is
this even? I'm Cain!

Sticking the money into Wise's trembling hand, the owner of the gold-red Satanella turns the back of his head towards him and majestically retires.

Past Wise, a crippled horse is being brought. Under her chest, there is a cloth, which is held by the stablemen on her shoulders from both sides. She wobbles pitifully on three healthy legs, carrying the broken leg raised and dangling lifelessly.

WISE

Damn it! If I had
known, I would have
never gone to these
vile races. How did
this happen?

MAN IN THE CROWD

It boggles the mind!
Some pebble must
have turned up or a
horseshoe
loosened... Then
again, the jockeys,
too... are well-
known coppers.

Flower comes rushing. He is shining and victoriously waving in the air a thick wad of money from afar.

FLOWER

We won! Do you understand? There wasn't a single ticket in the single, in the double or in the triple, except for yours! Here you go, three thousand five hundred and some change. This is not just some... this is serious money.

Wise is silent.

FLOWER

A hundred? You feel sorry for the howsey? Oh, come on, my dear. Fate doesn't know pity. Let's go to Frons' tavern and celebrate your victory.

WISE

(exclaims
hatefully)
Go away, Flower.

WISE

(thinks)
How many more misfortunes will I cause to everyone around me? What should I do with myself? Who will teach me?

But for some reason, pious Wise doesn't remember God at this minute. When he walks toward the exit, even with his eyes downcast, he feels that all eyes are fixed on him.

INT. HOTEL BARTHOLDI, ROOM CABINET, EVENING

Stunned by the shame and pity of his winnings, Wise suddenly remembers Cain's rude call.

WISE

And what was that
horse owner
shouting?

FLOWER

We must challenge
that rude giant to a
duel!

WISE

So do it!

FLOWER

(with undisguised joy)
As you wish.

The seconds bring Cain's consent and even convey his true words. He says angrily, 'I will put so many holes in that Wise that only his smell remains.'

WISE

(thinks)
Well, in that case,
I'll kill him.

EXT. THE FIELD OUTSIDE THE CITY, MORNING

The next day they hold the duel. Cain shoots first and misses; the bullet only slightly touches the sleeve of Wise's shirt. Wise, who is holding a gun for the first time in his life, begins to aim.

The giant stands half a turn in front of him, twenty paces away, ridiculously huge, red-nosed, calm, with his arms outstretched and splayed, with his head slightly tilted. His right ear, bathing in the sun, is a bright spot under a round castor hat. The remnants of anger that has subsided during the night completely evaporate from Wise's heart...

WISE

(thinks)

I will shoot his
ear... No, I'd
better aim for his
hat.

Wise squeezes his index finger. The shot pops sharply and Wise's ears are ringing and it smells of powder smoke. The hat falls off Cain.

Cain picks it up, examines it and wheezes calmly.

CAIN

Wonderfu-u-u-u...

Comes up to Wise with his outstretched hand.

CAIN

I apologize to
you... I thought
wrong of you... I
thought you were ...
mediocre... the
hat... And you, it
turns out, are a
nice and brave
fellow. But damn it,
Satan's luck you
have! Exclu-u-u...

Near the place of the duel, a country restaurant is comfortably placed in the greenery. At the end of the formalities of the duel, both men, their four witnesses and the doctor go there to order breakfast, about which the memory should remain with them for decades.

INT. RESTAURANT HALL, MORNING

After some salty appetizers, Wise and Cain are on the first name basis.

WISE
Sell me Satanela!

CAIN
Let's drink another
bottle of
champagne... and you
can have her!

Wise turns his eyes slightly at Flower and the checkbook instantly appears in front of him.

FLOWER
Write it... Just
write it...

WISE
You know what? I'm
buying your whole
stable... How many
horses do you have?

CAIN
Eight horses...

WISE
(yells)
But no breaking the
legs of the horses,
no beating them with
the riding crops.
And I actually wish
a kindergarten for
the horses! So that
I could kiss them in
the very nose! In
the muzzle! Without
consequences!
Hurrah!

CAIN

Let's go to the
Broadway. Times
Square, they have
French sharpers. I
lost a few thousand
there.

WISE

Fine. We go. But
first wash me with
seltzer water.

CAIN

Four Frenchmen.
Paul, Bilden,
Philippar and Galer.
You can do them in a
second... Do you
understand?

WISE

At once! I see.

CAIN

Your power, dear
Wise, is from the
devil. Don't you
think?

WISE

Y-Yes...

CAIN

Now d-do it.

WISE

I will show them!

CAIN

Show them.

INT. CITY CLUB, NIGHT

In the best city club, Wise beats four professional skillful sharpers in baccarat. Then he beats all the club members for a few hundred thousand.

WISE

Dear sirs. I beat
you and the French
for sure. The French
had it coming. And
you are simple,
good-natured sheep.
So just take back
all the money you
lost. I have double
vision. I have seen
through every card.
Do you want me to
name you in advance
any card in the deck
with my back to you?

They check him. They think of the twenty-seventh and ninth and thirty-sixth card from the deck. He closes his eyes for a second, opens them and immediately guesses: ace of spades, nine of Diamonds, two of diamonds. All explain this phenomenon by telepathy and occultism and willingly take their stakes back and many fight among themselves.

Cain refuses to take the money. He buttons all the buttons, crosses himself.

CAIN

Breathtaki-i-i...
However, I'm not
participating in
this strange game.
This money - to hell
with it!

And he grandly leaves without touching the heap of gold and paper.

INT. HOTEL BARTHOLDI, ROOM CABINET, MORNING

Flower reports that Mr. TRITCHEL has come to see him. It's the English jockey that rode Lady Winterset - the horse that broke its leg.

WISE

And who is that?

FLOWER

The Englishman, who was on Lady Winterset, the horse that broke its leg.

WISE

He may enter... I have a terrible headache...

TRITCHEL

I'm ready to offer you my services. The stable you bought is of very high quality but it has been losing it every year because of its previous owner's nature, who, in his hot temper, self-confidence and impatience, constantly changed his jockeys and trusted only mediocre and poorly educated trainers.

WISE

Fine... You're hired...

From this time on, Wise's horses begin collecting all the first prizes.

Moreover, once, instigated by a sudden and absurd fit of ambition, he volunteers himself, personally, to participate in a race of gentlemen.

All the arguments of prudence are against this wild undertaking, starting with the fact that Wise has never once in his life sat on a horse.

Mr. Tritchel specifically for this purpose acquires for a rather expensive price a welcoming, calm nine-year-old mare, six and a half inches tall. Her name is Mademoiselle Barbe. He himself gives his boss several riding lessons on a small stable track.

Wise, galloping in a tiny English saddle on a huge bay horse, reminds him of a fox terrier, balancing on the edge of an icy roof. Wise often turns around on Tritchel, hearing his short nasal snorts from the side. But each time his eyes meet the dry, bony, hook-nosed face of the bow-legged Englishman, filled with seriousness and dignity.

And contrary to logic and common sense, Wise nevertheless comes first in that gentlemen's race. Actually, he doesn't come but his strong and diligent horse brings him and he just sits on her, clutching the mane with both hands, losing the reins and stirrups, losing the cap and the whip. The audience meets him at the pillar with a thousand-voiced roar, laughter, whistling, shushing and loud applause.

INT. NEW YORK STOCK EXCHANGE, MORNING

Wise has become addicted to the stock market game. In this dark, complex and risky business, not only he is successful but insane, permanent happiness is following him everywhere like a willing slave.

In the shortest time, he becomes an oracle of the exchange. Commission brokers, the BROKER in the stock exchange hall and bankers suck up to him, weighing and appreciating his every word. He always acts randomly, solely under the influence of an instantaneous whim. He buys and sells papers, judging by whether he likes or doesn't like their names today, without having the slightest idea what enterprises these papers provide.

But when he's playing for a raise, immediately somewhere, on the edge of the world, somewhere far and foreign, powerful oil fountains begin to play and big gold deposits are suddenly found in the far Siberian mountains.

And if he bets on a decline, then old enterprises immediately suffer huge losses from strikes, fires and floods, from fluctuations of the foreign exchange, from sudden strong competition.

BROKER

What is the secret
of such amazing
success?

WISE

(shrugs and answers quite
sincerely)
Truly, I really
don't know...

But that is the hidden misfortune and invisible pain of Wise's life because he knows and cannot tell anyone.

INT. HOTEL BARTHOLDI, ROOM CABINET, MORNING

FLOWER

Do you know that
Halley's comet is
approaching Earth?

WISE

I read about it in
the newspapers...

FLOWER

People are afraid
that on May 19 of
1910, they will die
from poisoning with
poisonous substances
brought on its tail
when the comet
touches upon planet
Earth.

WISE

Reports of this have
seeped into
mainstream press.
And wreaked havoc.
Given the fact that
astronomers have
established the
exact chemical
composition of the
comets, rumors about
the poisoning of
Earth's atmosphere
with poisonous gases
dangerous to health
quickly spread among
the population.

FLOWER

I ordered a lot of
these "anti-comet
tablets" and "anti-
comet umbrellas" and
placed them in all
the apothecaries of
America. I call
these pills "Comet!"

WISE

What for?

FLOWER

Coming up with a
business idea based
on people's fears
will make us rich!
While waiting for
the End of the
World, people say
goodbye to their
families and
friends, they
besiege the
pharmacies in the
hopes of acquiring
an "antidote" for
the poisonous gases
from Halley.

WISE

What will the End of
the World be like?
Will death come
immediately from
poisoning, will
people slowly begin
to choke or die from
epidemics caused by
extraterrestrial
bacteria?

FLOWER

All this is
nonsense! But they
will bring us great
income!

WISE

And what is not
nonsense? What else
can we do?

FLOWER

You know it better
than I do!

WISE

Or maybe we should
begin making
electric cars? An
electric car can
successfully compete
with cars with
internal combustion
engines. We must buy
shares of the
company for the
production of
electric cars from
the Edison Company
of New York.

FLOWER

As you wish!

WISE

On April 29 of 1899,
the electric car La
Jamais Contente set
a speed record on
land. It was the
first in the world
to overcome a speed
of 62 m/h and
reached a speed of
65 m/h. Famous
American electric
car designer Walter
Baker received a
speed of 80 m/h. A
"Borland Electric"
electric car
traveled 103 miles
from Chicago to
Milwaukee on a
battery. The next
day, after
recharging, it
returned to Chicago
on its own. The
average speed was 34
m/h.

FLOWER

Impressive
results...

WISE

Oh... Introduce me
to the physicist
Robert Hutchings
GODDARD.

FLOWER

It will be done
right away...

We hear a knock at the door.

WISE

Come in.

A young man enters the room.

INT. WISE'S CABINET, MORNING

GODDARD

Let me introduce
myself. My name is
Robert Hutchings
Goddard! After
receiving my
bachelor's degree at
the Worcester
Polytechnic
Institute in 1908, I
studied at the
Physics Department
of Clark University,
receiving a master's
degree in 1910 and a
PhD in 1911!

WISE

950 Main St,
Worcester, MA 01610!
I graduated from the
same university. A
few days ago, I read
your article on the
multi-stage rocket.
Please, sit. Would
you like tea or
coffee?

GODDARD

It'd be nice to have
some tea!

FLOWER

I will order to
bring two cups of
tea...

A servant enters the study quietly and carries two Chinese cups and a small teapot on a tray.

GODDARD

I need a small financial support to build a multistage rocket.

WISE

I can finance your project!

GODDARD

In 1914, I will be ready to design rocket engines...

WISE

(to Flower)
Write a check for 100'000 dollars to Robert Hutchings Goddard!

FLOWER

(writes a check and gives it to Wise to sign)
Already done...

GODDARD

I have registered a U.S. Patent 1 102 653, which describes a multistage rocket. The second, U.S. Patent 1 103 503 describes a rocket powered by gasoline and liquid nitrogen oxide.

WISE

Of course, the future is behind rockets!

FLOWER

(laughs quietly)
Goddard will launch
his first liquid
fuel rocket only on
March 16 of 1926, in
Auburn,
Massachusetts. The
journal entry of
this event will be
as follows: "The
first flight with a
rocket using liquid
propellants was made
yesterday at Aunt
Effie's farm. The
rocket, which was
dubbed "Nell," rose
just 41 feet during
a 2.5-second
flight."

GODDARD

(picks up the check from Wise
and smiles)
How do you know
this? Are you a
soothsayer?

FLOWER

No, I'm just saying
that this event will
be an important
demonstration of the
capabilities of
liquid rocket
engines and future
flights of humans to
space.

WISE

Mr. Flower is a
famous visionary in
NEW YORK!

GODDARD
Like Edgar Cayce?

WISE
No, Cayce supposedly
heals patients by
falling into a
trance and gives
advice on their
treatment.

FLOWER
No, I'm not a
professional medium.
Please, come to our
new house hall to
see the
cinematograph.

GODDARD
Do you have your own
cinematograph?

WISE
Yes, I recently
acquired it from the
Lumière brothers.

Flower, Wise and Goddard go to a small room, in which the Lumière brothers' apparatus is installed. The curtains on the windows are lowered and a white screen is seen on the wall.

INT. SMALL HALL IN WISE'S HOUSE, DAY

Wise and Goddard sit in large soft chairs. A servant brings in a box of "La Gloria Cubana" cigars.

WISE
A good cigar is as
much a tribute to
the laws of society
as the ability to
read French...

With a special knife, Wise cuts off the tip of the cigar, then puts it in his mouth. The servant lights the cigar for him.

Flower approaches the Lumière brothers' apparatus and we see a film on the screen.

CAPTIONS:

John F. Kennedy Space Center, July 26 of 1971,
13:34:00 UTC

We see the launch complex and the launch of the spacecraft "Apollo 15." The photographs of the crew are visible on the screen: David SCOTT, Alfred WARDEN and James IRWIN.

INT. APOLLO 15, DAY

IRWIN

Together with David,
we begin the
transition to the
lunar module.

SCOTT

The transition is
complete, all
systems of the lunar
module have been
activated.

WARDEN

Begin undocking!

SCOTT

Undocking failed.

WARDEN

Analysis of the
telemetry
information showed
that the docking
mechanism isn't
receiving the signal
to release the
latches.

IRWIN

Why?

WARDEN

Poor contact in the
electrical system
plug.

The pilot of the command module, Alfred Warden, inflates the transition tunnel, opens the hatch, disconnects and connects again all the plugs.

We see that the telemetry at the John F. Kennedy Space Center command post shows that the problem has been fixed. The ships have been undocked.

10/8/2018 VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE, USA

EXT. VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE, USA, EVENING

We see the bright flames of the Falcon 9 rocket engines. At the launch site is the President of the company SpaceX Elon MUSK and the mayor of Los Angeles, Eric GARCETTI.

MUSK

Long-term plans
require heavy and,
in the case of the
buyers' demand, even
super-heavy media.
Ultimately, I
believe that the
price of payload to
be put into orbit of
500 USD/lb. and less
is quite achievable.

GARCETTI

Elon Musk broke up
the darkness of the
night over
California!

So far, SpaceX has been launching its reusable rockets from Cape Canaveral in Florida or offshore platforms in the Atlantic and the current, 30th, launch of the Falcon 9 rocket has become the first on the West Coast.

MUSK

The first stage of the rocket, as planned, made a successful controlled landing at the spaceport - for the first time in the history of rocket launches from the West Coast of America. The launch took place at 07:21 pm local time and eight minutes later, the first stage of the launch vehicle safely landed on a special platform.

GARCETTI

Is there a payload?

MASK

The rocket set into high orbit Argentina's satellite SAOCOM 1A.

The Argentinian
radar satellite will
transmit to Earth
information about
weather conditions,
soil conditions and
crops from the orbit
of 385-mile
altitude.

The bright flame of rocket engines has dispersed
the darkness over California to the delight of
eyewitnesses, who flooded the social media
platforms with colorful photos and videos of the
launch.

INT. SMALL HALL IN WISE'S HOUSE, DAY

GODDARD

What did we just
see?

FLOWER

The future..., which
you will immediately
forget upon leaving
this room...

WISE

(laughs)

Yes, Mr. Flower
loves showing
fantastic films...

FLOWER

Tomorrow we're
participating in the
car race for the
Vanderbilt Cup...

GODDARD

On which car will
you be racing?

FLOWER

Electric car
Columbia Mark 68
Victoria. Electric
cars today are
widespread in
America and
successfully compete
with cars with
internal combustion
engines. But then
electric cars will
be considered
unpromising and will
be forgotten for
many years.

WISE

I'm Thomas Edison's
main shareholder. We
produce electric
cars in the Edison
Company of New York.
Famous American
electric car
designer Walter
Baker received a
speed of 80 m/h. A
"Borland Electric"
electric car
traveled from
Chicago to Milwaukee
(103 miles) on a
battery. The next
day (after
recharging), the
electric car
returned to Chicago
on its own.

GODDARD

I admire you!

EXT. CAR RACE ON THE ROAD OF GENERAL USE, MORNING

Up to 500 thousand people come to the race of 1910.

In the electric car, we see Wise and Flower.

WISE

Who is ahead of us?

FLOWER

Louis-Joseph Chevrolet. This crew has no chance to defeat us. The crew of a racecar sits in a completely open and unprotected cockpit on some simple seats. The driver and the mechanic are not wearing any seat belts. During such an accident, there is practically no chance for the crew to survive.

WISE

But we have the seat belts that I've invented!

FLOWER

Careful, the driver didn't slow down on the turn. As a result, he lost control and turned over. And at that turn, that other driver didn't slow down and as a result of a sharp skid lost the front wheel, which led to its crash.

WISE

We must come first!

FLOWER

Yes, sir!

We see Louis Chevrolet's car, going at a speed of 75 m/h, fly over the fence. We see the mechanic Charles Miller die.

Wise's grand lifestyle soon attracts attention and they begin to make inquiries about Wise in a covert manner. But there is nothing to complain about: both the inheritance and the striking gains on the stock market are obvious. In addition, he extremely generously flings his money about.

At charity nights, concerts, bazaars, public subscriptions and lotteries the largest donations are under his name. Nobody gives money as willingly as he does for scholarships, incentives and beds in hospitals. But he himself notices with deep chagrin that his generosity has only brought misfortune, ruin, fastness, illness and death.

INT. MORRIS-JUMEL MANSION, DAY

Flower buys for Wise Morris Jumel's mansion and Thomas Couture's painting "The Romans during their decadence."

WISE

Beautiful mansion...

FLOWER

The oldest house in Manhattan was built in 1756 in Brooklyn. This Palladian style mansion was built by the British loyalist Roger Morris and is one of the most beautiful houses in the city. In October of 1776, George Washington was using this house as his headquarters before the Americans left the city.

Stephen Jumel bought
it soon after that.
His widow, Eliza,
became the wife of
the former vice-
president Aaron
Burr. The wedding
ceremony was held in
that very mansion in
1833.

Wise stops by the painting.

WISE

I have never seen
this painting!

FLOWER

Almost all European
countries considered
themselves the heirs
of the Roman Empire.
Western art has its
roots in the
Renaissance and,
therefore, in all
that was borrowed
from the Roman
culture. The
European nations,
while searching for
their development
model, continued to
copy the
architecture,
political structures
and art of the Roman
Empire.

WISE

History will always
remain subjective
and paintings will
always be an
illusion of
realism...

FLOWER

This painting depicts with all the spicy details the last stage of the night orgy in a luxurious palace, which meets the tastes of the golden mean.

WISE

And what is the story?

FLOWER

The story gave a reason for the demonstration of beautiful naked bodies and exquisite furnishings. At the same time, raging passions appeared in a refined way - explicit enough to pleasantly tickle the imagination and detached enough not to disturb the sanctimonious chastity of the bourgeoisie. The painting is remarkable more for its plot than artistic merit.

Using this painting as an example, the artist showed the evolution that classicism underwent from the era of David when ancient heroes served as an ideal of morality and citizenship, before Rome's portrayal as the city immersed in pleasures and luxury.

WISE

I like photography more...
Painting is the making of the mind, not connected with reality and therefore, an abstract thing, evoking feelings that the author put in his work, provided that the author is good, or leaving you indifferent if the author is empty.
That's it. A photograph, however, has the same virtues that convey the emotions and state of the artist but it is also a hard fixation of a piece of time that passes in a split second of exposure.

Time... the
strangest and most
unexplored
substance, in which
we constantly live,
are born, fight for
survival and die,
leaving or not
leaving a mark in
the surrounding
space. And looking
at a photograph,
unlike when you look
at a painting,
sometimes it becomes
unbearable and your
skin crawls from
this feeling of
inevitable
transience of
everything around,
from a leaf on a
tree to the
seemingly eternal
stone pyramids.
Only a photograph
can display time so
piercingly and at
least somehow
visualize something
that cannot be
understood at all.
Only by looking at a
photograph, you can
dive into the real
past, sometimes into
a terribly distant
time that has turned
into dust, gone to
nowhere.

Here, you see all
this, feel the
breeze, moving the
leaves above the
bench with a sweet
child, dreaming at
that moment about
the promised flight
of a bird and only
therefore, able to
keep himself from
moving at the time
of removing the cap
from the lens. And
you realize that
this child matured
long ago, grew up,
got married, buried
his parents,
survived two wars
and if he was lucky,
got old, became ill
and died already
half a century ago.
And this simple
photograph can cause
such an explosion of
feelings that I
think is impossible
for the most
magnificent
pictorial art. Not
to mention anything
more relevant.

Therefore, I appreciate the artists, who manage to look beyond the plane of the canvas, to find the vibrations that can transmit the intangible, ephemeral and elusive that is present in the picture. And don't think that it is a question of photorealists or realism in general. It is incomparably different, independent of the artist's style and classification, an exceptionally rare quality, the ability to probably go insane and show something that cannot be shown. I appreciate actual art, I understand it, of course, I like most of it but I'm sure that art historians need to come up with some new name for all that has fallen on the observer in the last century, half a century and especially, in recent decades.

It's great,
certainly amazing,
very interesting,
absolutely
wonderful, advanced,
stylish and deserves
attention and
museums.
Only the name should
be different.

FLOWER

Painting is a
product of human
motions. Photography
is the manipulation
of movement with the
help of an
artificially created
apparatus. I
consider painters
better artists than
photographers. Any
painter can be a
photographer.

WISE

Any painting is a
reality processed by
the brain, depending
only on the artist's
state of madness and
the camera is an
impartial fixer of
time, although the
composition is
undoubtedly
controlled by the
same head, it's
almost impossible
for a photographer
to distort a picture
within the
established glass.

It's obvious, they have the technique and the foundations of the artistic style. Very rarely photographers will be able to draw. And even if they need support, they turn to the classics of art. Even in Magnum, in spite of the fact that they place emphasis on reporting, one can see their desire to be like artists.

FLOWER

And what is your take on cinema?

WISE

Cinema is starting to explain a lot about what is bad and what is good... But a picture suggests understatement. I've recently seen the 16-minute film "Frankenstein." More precisely, I was at the premiere of the film on March 18 of 1910.

FLOWER

Among other things, the film was shot at an Edison studio and it was directed and written by J. Searle Dawley, whom I've recently introduced to you.

WISE

I have previously
read the novel
"Frankenstein or the
Modern Prometheus"
by Mary Shelley but
the director J.
Searle Dawley
changed the plot of
the novel into a
moral and
philosophical
parable, contrasting
human feelings and a
scientist's
rationality.

FLOWER

Much to my shame, I
haven't read the
novel or seen the
film... What's the
hidden meaning
behind that story?

WISE

A young student,
Frankenstein,
secludes himself in
the university
laboratory and tries
to create the
perfect human.
However, an ugly
creature, a Beast
that is far from
perfect appears from
a huge reagent
boiler.

Frankenstein leaves the laboratory in horror. At home, he's calmed by his bride Elizabeth and Frankenstein comes to the conclusion that artificial creation of a human being is a false path and truth lies only in human feelings. On their wedding day, the Monster, which cannot exist without its creator, breaks into Elizabeth's boudoir.

Frankenstein comes to her cries.

Elizabeth is lying unconscious. The Monster knocks him down and disappears.

Frankenstein is overwhelmed with love for Elizabeth and this feeling finally pushes the Beast from his mind. The film ends with a metaphorical episode in which the Beast sees its reflection in the mirror and raises its arms in a threat but suddenly disappears and its reflection in the mirror remains.

Frankenstein walks over to the mirror and sees the Beast instead of himself.

But the struggle
between good and
evil in his soul is
already over: the
terrible image in
the mirror changes
to Frankenstein's
own reflection.

FLOWER

Well... The science
that came out from
under the tutelage
of the church
confidently and
publicly rejected
the idea of the
divine creation of
the world and man.
Spiritual and
secular life began
to be determined by
the movement of
bodies, the movement
of gases, the
movement of heat and
the movement of
light. Electric cars
remained the most
mysterious of all
that science could
demonstrate to the
public that was
hungry for
discoveries. The
student Victor
Frankenstein managed
to find a way to
revive a man
assembled from the
fragments of bodies
of several dead
people. The creature
moved, reacted to
irritation, showed
free will.

It escaped, felt the
cruelty of the crowd
in full, in
suffering, it gained
the ability to speak
- and returned to
its creator to call
him to account...
Require a soul for
itself.

WISE

Shelly drew a
stunningly precise
line between science
and morality.
Science is the way
of knowing the
world. The soul is a
symbol of the
incognizable in a
man. In our hearts,
we say "no" to
monsters and fiends
because there is no
moral secret in
their cruelty. They
are like stones
whose chemical
composition,
structure and form
can be accurately
determined and
reproduced. And the
soul is the focus of
good, a moral force.
A creature assembled
from dead flesh
didn't find this
power in itself and
tried to find it
outside of itself...
Science, having
abandoned morality,
is doomed to create
monsters...

WISE

I cannot remember
all my employees.

FLOWER

The staff of
employees is
increasing every
day. At the head of
all, is the butler,
the majestic gray-
haired whisker, who
looks like the
Russian ambassador
in London. He's
followed by the
valet, the senior
cook, who's been
discharged from
Moscow from Olivier.
He's round as a ball
and shaved. Then we
have the black-
bearded driver, the
coachman for the
English harness, the
German gardener with
glasses in charge of
the greenhouse and
the winter garden
and a dozen other
small servants. You
don't even need to
know them.

WISE

And what are we
having for dinner?

FLOWER

Today is Tuesday.
We're having a quiet
dinner.

I carefully selected
and filtered the
guests, trying to
prevent the
intrusion of the
street.

WISE

Yes... Only wit,
ingenuity in fun,
talent, grace,
beauty, taste for
life and good-
natured courtesy
should serve as
patents for entering
these evenings!
Never let the
secular snobbery,
lazy and sated
curiosity, stupid
and boring people,
prudent seekers of
connections and
acquaintances come
to my house.

FLOWER

Don't worry! Artists
and artistes of all
professions, actors,
singers, dancers,
musicians,
composers, art
experts, sculptors,
decorators, poets,
clowns, magicians,
imitators and a
special breed of
high society
amateurs, who always
have some tales to
tell, are always
welcome guests.
All the pretty women
of the city will be
at our evenings...

WISE

Arrange a playful
Chinese procession
with lanterns,
dragons and
stretchers for the
next dinner!

FLOWER

As you wish!

WISE

Let the guests come
in costumes of the
XVIII century...

FLOWER

Will do! All the
guests will be sent
costumes of the
XVIII century...

WISE

I want to play a
vaudeville with
singing or a whole
comic opera on my
script!

FLOWER

Will do! I bought
the richest cellar
of wines from a
ruined Polish mogul,
which, according to
the rarity and
subtlety of the
varieties, was
considered the
fourth in the world.

WISE

Wonderful! And what
about dishware?

FLOWER

I bought, on a particularly fortunate occasion, antique silver and ancient French porcelain with stamps in the form of golden lilies. I got at third hand aromatic and aged cigars!

MORRIS-JUMEL MANSION, NIGHT

They have dinner on separate tables, in twos and fours, depending, who wants how. The men are serving their women and themselves. There is a buffet at their disposal, generously supplied with wines and cold delicious appetizers.

FLOWER

I want to introduce to you actress JULIA Swayne Gordon and screenwriter EUGENE Mullin.

JULIA

Good evening! The whole city admires you when you drive through the streets in a fine afternoon, reigning from the height of the English dogcart two pairs of perfectly selected and trained Isabella horses of sandy color with clean washed silver-white manes and tails.

WISE

Thank you. Did you
want to ask me
something?

EUGENE

In the city, there
are all sorts of
malicious rumors
about your dinners.
It's almost
impossible to get to
them but in fact,
despite the
unbridled enjoyment,
the complete absence
of tension, they are
decent, elegant and
quite chaste.

Wise wants something and it is just like he wants
it. And often his calm, quick glance, directed
through the entire dining room, stops at the very
beginning a risky trick, a very loud laugh or a
sharp gesture.

In his diversified life, Wise is confronted with
hundreds of people but he doesn't converge with one
person during this time, he doesn't connect with
anyone on a spiritual level. With the same
wonderful ability of "double vision," with which
Wise can see the relief of the empress and the year
of minting on a gold coin clutched in Flower's fist
or guess any card from the deck, just as easily he
can read every man's mind.

JULIA

We want to make a
film about Lady
Godiva.

WISE

I will give you
money...

JULIA

It's that simple?

WISE

Here's what. It was enough for me to read your thoughts. For this, intently and intensely peering into you, imagining within myself your gestures, movements, voice, secretly making my face like your face and immediately after some instant, almost inexplicable spiritual effort, similar to the desire to reincarnate, all the thoughts of another person, all his desires, obvious, hidden and even unknown to himself, all the feelings and their shades are revealed to me. This state feels like penetrating an impenetrable cap, going into the very middle of an extremely complex and subtle mechanism and I can observe the imperceptible, intricate work of all its parts: springs, wheels, gears, cylinders and levers.

JULIA

Such an ability to
go deeper by
external signs, by
the smallest, barely
perceptible changes
in a face into the
depths of other
souls, perhaps, is
not based on
anything mysterious.
It is possessed, to
a greater or lesser
degree, by old
judicial
investigators,
talented criminal
detectives,
experienced fortune-
tellers,
psychiatrists,
portrait painters
and shrewd monastic
elders.

WISE

My gift has made me
deeply unhappy.
Every day, the
depths of human
filth unfold in
front of me. In
their souls lies,
deceit, betrayal,
venality, hatred,
envy, boundless
greed and cowardice
stir. Venerable old
men, grandfathers
that look like
patriarchs, innocent
young girls,
blooming young men,
immaculate matrons
of many children,
good-natured fat

wits, city fathers,
politicians,
philanthropists and
benefactresses,
progressive writers,
those, who serve the
arts and religion –
all of them in the
cellars of their
thoughts are
thieves, rapists,
robbers, perjurers,
murderers, perverted
adulterers thousands
of times. Their
semi-conscious,
instant, often
involuntary desires
are like a pack of
bloodthirsty and
lustful animals
under lock, the key
to which is in an
unknown and wise
hand. And every day
I feel a growing
disdain for people
and an aversion to
humanity.

JULIA

Have you ever loved
someone?

WISE

Oh, how many times
trembling and docile
female hands
stretched towards me
and their eyes –
foggy, wet – were
looking for my eyes
and my lips opened
for a kiss.

But through the mask
of professional
coquetry, under the
guise of loving
self-deception, I
perceived either
open thirst for my
gold or the secret,
instinctive slavish
worship of the power
of wealth, brought
up by hundreds of
generations. I give
women a smile and
with internal
disgust, stay cold
and inaccessible. In
the whole world,
there was only one
irreplaceable,
incomparable, most
beautiful woman,
whose pink face hid
in a bouquet of
lilac and whose dark
eyes laughed,
caressed and drew me
in. But before her
distant image the
omnipotence of
desires was silent.

Wise surrounds her with silent adoration, quiet
selfless love, not daring to wait for an answer. It
gives him so much pleasure to find her name in the
notebook and read it but he won't dare to go to the
address that she gave him herself.

Reading other people's thoughts is not his only
misfortune.

He is also burdened by the constant coincidence of
his slightest desires with their instant execution.
Wise doesn't wish anyone ill but involuntarily
causes damage at every turn.

And there is another deep, sad grief. From him, so magically subjugating to the present, all the past has sailed somewhere into the unknown darkness. Not that he has forgotten it but he can't remember. Yesterday's experiences are comparatively clear but the day before yesterday comes as a memory in fragments and then fog thickens. Some pale images flash incoherently in him, familiar voices sound but they come only for a second to disappear without a trace and Wise is unable to catch or stop them. Sometimes in the evenings, staying alone in his luxurious cabinet, Wise sits for a long time, clutching his hair with his fingers and trying to recall what has happened to him before. Bits of these memories flash before him: a railroad, some neglected garden, a weird laboratory, a book in red morocco, a red headed postman, a fireball explosion, an old church man, a goat's face, a Turcoman carpet pattern, a girl in a car window...

But there's no connection, no meaning, no clarity in these visions. They don't cling to his consciousness, they only irritate his memory and oppress his will.

From his efforts to remember, Wise gets terrible headaches as if someone is driving a long screw through his entire brain and his soul is squeezing from such aching longings that are even more painful than the headaches. Exhausted, Wise quickly undresses and tells himself to go to sleep and immediately sinks into silence and peace.

He always sees the same dream: yellow wallpaper with green corollas and pink flowers, a Japanese or Chinese screen with storks and a fisherman, a canary cage, a cactus on the window and a uniform cap with a velvet band and turquoise edges. These unpretentious objects are surrounded with such a radiance of early youth, such charm of innocent but forever lost joys, such sweet sadness that waking up in the middle of the night, Wise wonders why his pillow is wet. But he can never remember his dream.

INT. CABINET, MORNING

A SERVANT serves Wise coffee.

SERVANT

Last night, I went
through your
wardrobe and in an
old gray suit, in
the pocket, I found
these... some tokens
or jettons... I
don't know...

The servant carefully puts a small round tray on the table, on which about thirty square plates of ivory lie in a neat pile. Various Latin letters are engraved and written on them in enamel.

WISE

(takes one with two fingers
and brings it to his eyes)
Take it somewhere.

The servant leaves. Wise drinks coffee and occasionally glances at the square.

WISE

(thinks)
I know, I've seen
this square
somewhere before...
Some distant,
extremely important
and mysterious
memory is connected
with it.

Wise puts the square in his pocket and begins to dress. His PERSONAL SECRETARY enters.

PERSONAL SECRETARY

Someone is here to
see you, one Michael
Morrow. I can't
understand what kind
of person he is. And
no matter how I
tried to persuade
him, he wouldn't
leave. And by all
means wants to
personally... Well?

Flower's stooge, a low and fat fidgety southerner
in a tortoise pince-nez, cut so low that his head
looks like a white ball, with cheeks, lips and chin
blue from shaving. The personal secretary manages
everything, spurs everyone, is impertinent,
arrogant and noisy and, in essence, knows nothing,
cannot and does not do anything.

The personal secretary slaps Wise on the shoulder,
on the stomach and on the back and calls him "my
dear"; and only at Flower always looks with the
same greedy, begging, faithful eyes just like
Flower looks at Wise.

Wise is afraid of him and is always shy because of
his familiarity.

WISE

(gritting his teeth)
Ask him in. And
you... you... just
disappear from where
you're standing! And
don't ever come
back!

The personal secretary doesn't move but quickly
begins to fade, pale, discolor, becomes transparent
and then only a vague outline remains and after two
seconds, this ghost actually disappears like a
light steam that rose and melted in the air.

WISE

(thinks)

Here goes my first
hallucination. It
started. I had it
coming.

There is a knock at the door.

WISE

Who is there? Just
come in!

He closes his eyes wearily and when he opens them, a short, fat man is standing in front of him, all shiny: his full rosy face is shiny, his curly hair and curled mustache are shiny, his clean-shaven chin is shiny and the silk cuffs of the long black coat are shiny.

MORROW

Don't you recognize
me? Michael Morrow.

Wise doesn't recognize Morrow and at the same time, his every movement, every vibration of his voice are infinitely familiar to him. His paralyzed memory is silent. But according to his habit of talking daily with a lot of people, who know him but whom he doesn't remember at all, Wise confidently answers, pointing to the chair.

WISE

Of course, of
course... I
remember...
Mathematics teacher
Morrow... of course.
Thank you. Please,
have a seat. What
can I do you for?

Morrow is overwhelmed by the strict comfort of the stylish large cabinet and the condescending courtesy of the host.

It is clear that he wants to remind Wise and talk deeply about something from their past, something sweet, warm and simple and Wise is expecting that to happen.

MORROW

I caught a cold,
began to lose my
hearing, my voice is
almost gone... all
this, of course, is
temporary and will
go away eventually
but you know what
people are like...
Competition,
haters... Now the
doctors are sending
me to some healing
waters... How am I
supposed to go? I
have no money.
Whatever I had is
pawned and
mortgaged...

Wise writes him a check for two thousand dollars. Saying goodbye, he holds the teacher's hand for a moment.

WISE

(rubbing his forehead in a shy
voice)

Please, wait... My
memory fails me...
Just let me... Gah!
Dammit! I just
can't... Just tell
me where we met.

MORROW

Oh, for goodness
sake! Mr. Wise! How
is that possible? I
taught mathematics
at school with you.
Can't you remember?

Are you remembering
now? You were a
great cryptographer.
No? You don't
remember?

WISE

(buries his face in his hands and
groans quietly)

Excuse me. I can't
take it anymore.
Please, leave...

He's afraid and bored to be alone and all day, he wanders aimlessly around the city. Buys a string of pearls from the Duran's and gives it to a pretty circus artiste, who once fell from a wire because of him or so he thought. He sits for about an hour in the library with a newspaper in his hand.

He is in such a heavy, restless and depressed state of expectation, which happens with nervous people before a thunderstorm or, perhaps, with patients that are waiting for a serious operation, "If only it were all over already!"

He leaves the hotel quite late when pink, green and purple twilight is warmly descending onto the city. He lets the rig go even earlier and walks, deep in thought, with his hands in his pockets, not responding to the low bows of the people he knows or strangers.

Wise's thoughts are all crowded around two morning events. Undoubtedly, there is some kind of distant, elusive connection between them and at the same time, they mutually exclude each other like phenomena from opposite worlds.

Radiant and pitiful Morrow belongs to something from the past, something so comprehensible, simple and sweet but irrevocable, inaccessible. He touches something infinitely close but now forgotten. And the ivory squares with the Latin letters exactly mark the transition to Wise's present existence - a fantastic but sorrowful one.

At the crossroads, Wise stops, aimlessly turning the square in his pocket with his right hand.

A tram runs down the street from above, throwing crackling sheaves of violet and green sparks from under the wheels. An elderly woman, leading a girl of about six by the hand, is crossing the street.

WISE

(thinks)

Now she will turn
around, see the
tram, stop for a
second and she's
late and runs over
the rails. What a
wild habit all women
have to wait for the
last moment and at
the most
inconvenient time,
rush to cut a horse
or a carriage. It's
as if they are
deliberately trying
fate or playing with
death. And,
probably, this
happens only from
cowardice.

And so it happens. The woman sees the fast moving tram and is distracted by it, so she rushes forward and backward. At the very last split second, the child turns out to be wiser than the adult with her bestial instinct. The girl pulls out her little hand and jumps back. The elderly woman, with her arms up, turns round and rushes towards the child. At this moment, the tram runs into her and knocks her down.

Wise fully experiences and feels all that happens with the woman in those seconds: haste, confusion, helplessness, horror.

Together with her from a distance, he inwardly fusses, feels lost, thrusts himself back and forth and finally falls between the rails, deafened by the blow. There is one last, short, like a zigzag of a lightning, extraordinary, unbearably bright moment when Wise immediately runs through his entire past life, from major events to the smallest things.

Many, who come close to death – whether it happens in the water, in the fire, underground or in the air – are said to have experienced similar sensations.

Wise sees, as if in a crystal magic mirror, his childhood: brass helmets of firemen and terrible night team trips, playing dibs, catching fish with tied trousers on the river and fistfights of city boys on the ice-covered Thames. His religious school and gymnasium and all the service in the school and his peaceful living in the garret on the sixth floor. And then Flower's visit and the house in Washington and that scary night in his alchemist uncle's laboratory and the way back, charming Emily Short with her bouquet of lilac, her pink face and sweet voice and all his life after that, full of boredom, delirium, involuntary evil and absurd luxury. All this flashes in one thousandth of a second.

WISE

(losing
consciousness
screams in
a wild
voice)

Afro-Amestigon!

He wakes up in a cab next to Flower, who is holding him behind his back with one hand and holding a bottle of liquid ammonia near his nose. With an attentive, serious and deep look, he peers into Wise's face and Wise manages to notice that his eyes are not empty now and not light as before but dark-brown, deep and not hard-cold but relaxed, almost affectionate.

INT. CABINET, DAY

Flower puts Wise in a chair, lowers the window curtains and lights the electricity.

FLOWER

Bring us some
cognac!

A footman complies with the order. Flower personally locks the door behind him.

FLOWER

(pours a big glass)
Drink, my dear
patron and client.
Drink, calm down and
let's talk. Well,
the most important
thing happened. You
said the word. And,
you see, nothing
terrible happened.

Cognac warms and calms Wise. But there is no longer any enmity towards Flower, no contempt, no former imperative treatment with him.

WISE

Are you
Mephistopheles?

FLOWER

(smiling)
Oh, no. No, my
friend, I am nowhere
near that important.
We are small
creatures, we
serve... A gray team
if you will.

WISE

And my secretary?

FLOWER

Well, this one is really just an errand boy. Oh, how great it was when you made him disappear this morning. I admired you. What an insolent boy! However, let's talk business. Well, did you experience real power?

WISE

Oh, to hell with it!

FLOWER

Really? You don't want it anymore?

WISE

I've had more than enough. I hate it!

FLOWER

I'm glad to hear that. But did you have... No, not now, not now... Now you are dreaming... Even earlier, in reality when you were not a fabulous millionaire and the idol of golden youth but simply a modest mathematics teacher... Did you have any secret, small, even the most insignificant wish?

WISE

Of course, I had...
I wanted to be a
school headmaster so
much and go outside
in a uniform cap...

FLOWER

(seriously)
It's done.

WISE

Yes, but if this
again involves some
kind of weirdness...

FLOWER

No weirdness. Do you
want it?

WISE

Yes, very much.

FLOWER

It will come true in
a minute. Say the
word again.

WISE

(slowly and without haste)
Afro-Amestigon.

FLOWER

That's all. And now
listen to me. You
accidentally learned
of a great mystery,
which is very, very
old, more than
thirty centuries.
King Solomon himself
once found it in the
depths of the
invisible world of
spirits.

From him, it passed
on to the
Phoenicians, to the
Chaldeans, then to
the Indian sages,
then went back to
Egypt, then to
Spain, to France
and, finally, to
America. Together
with this secret,
you have received an
incomparable,
amazing, enormous
power.

Thousands of
invisible creatures
serve you as loyal
slaves, including
myself, who has
adopted this shabby
appearance and this
stupid battle
nickname. And you're
lucky that you
turned out to be a
person with such a
kind soul and with
such... don't be
offended, my dear...
with such... how
shall I put this
more politely?

With a simple mind.
A villain in your
place would have
drenched the entire
world in blood and
lit it with fire. A
wise man would
strive to make it a
paradise on earth
but he himself would
die a cruel and
painful death.

You have avoided
both and I will tell
you the truth that
even without the
cabbalistic word,
you have undeniable
supernatural luck.

WISE

Yes, I have...

FLOWER

But how many
tremendous human
temptations you have
neglected, my dear
Wise!

You could have
traveled around the
globe and seen it in
all its luxurious
diversity, with its
seas, mountains,
rivers, waterfalls,
from the fiery
equator to the
mysterious point of
the pole.

You would see the
oldest monuments of
historical
antiquity, the
greatest creations
of art, the living
diverse life of
nations.

Paris with its taste
and fun, the self-
loving and lasting
comfort of England,
the crazy life in
Russia, the
bullfighting in
Madrid, the Egyptian
pyramids, the Roman
carnival, the beauty
of Constantinople
and Venice.

The paradise on
earth that is the
Polynesian islands,
the fabulous
panoramas of India,
Buddhist temples and
smoking rooms in
China, blooming and
tender Japan -
everything would
have flashed before
your enchanted
eyes... You didn't
want this... and now
it's too late... You
definitely forgot or
didn't want to know
that there were many
beautiful women in
the world. Not only
their beauty, for
which the best
people happily give
their lives, waited
for the wave of your
hand but also the
mind, grace, talent
and that paragon of
a woman's charm,
which is achieved by
hundreds of years of
culture. But you
timidly and
hopelessly dreamed
of only one, not
daring...

WISE

(frowns)

Let's leave it.

FLOWER

(lowers his eyes and bows his
head respectfully)

As you wish. But
let's continue...

You never thought
about power, about
the huge,
overwhelming
domination over the
mass of people and I
could have given it
to you... Do you
remember when we
were together on the
tribune and the
President of America
passed by? I was
watching you and I
saw how sharply and
intensely you were
looking into his
face and body. And I
know that for a few
seconds, you
penetrated his shell
and were him.

WISE

(whispers)

Yes, yes. You're
right.

FLOWER

I saw your face and
I saw how
expressions of
grandeur,
friendliness,
boredom, deadly
fear, disgust,
fatigue and,
finally, pity
reflected in it one
after the other.
No, you are not
overbearing.
But you are not
curious either.

Why did you never
want to, did not try
to look into that
great book where the
greatest secrets of
the universe are
kept?

It would have opened
before you. You
would have
understood the
infinity of time and
the immeasurability
of space, would have
felt the fourth
dimension,
experienced death
and resurrection,
learned the
terrible, wonderful
properties of matter
hidden from the
human inquiring mind
for hundreds of
thousands of years -
and there are many,
including the
mysterious Radium -
only the first
syllable of the
alphabet. You turned
away from knowledge,
passed by it, like
you walked by power,
women, wealth, an
insatiable thirst
for impressions. And
in all this
indifference lies
your great
happiness, dear
friend.

WISE

Yes...

FLOWER

We have very little
time left. Do you
tend to listen to
me? If you're still
hesitating, then
lift your head and
look at me.

Before him, sits a clean, complacent, silver-haired
old man with pleasant, kind eyes of soft tobacco
color.

WISE

(looks and smiles gently)
I obey.

FLOWER

And right you are.
Now draw the "Star
of Solomon" on
paper. No, you don't
need a ruler, nor a
protractor, nor
efforts. Take at
sight sixty degrees
in every angle. Time
is running fast and
we don't have much
of it... Well, at
least this way...
Now put down the
letters. In the
middle, is the sign
of Satan. It is
snaked by the seal
of Solomon. They are
crossed by
Astaroth's crossed
horns.

WISE

Don't tell me, I
know, I remember...

Wise without errors, quickly and accurately fills
out the formula.

FLOWER

Yes, that's right.

In Flower's red eyes, in the very pupils, the familiar purple lights start burning.

FLOWER

Now listen to me.
Now you will burn
this piece of paper,
saying the word
that, damn it, I do
not dare to utter.
And then you will be
free. You will
emerge safely from
the whirlpool where
life has so
strangely thrown
you. But before it
happens, tell me, do
you, at the very
bottom of your
heart, have any
regrets about the
magnificence that
surrounds you? Would
you like to take
something fun, spicy
and expensive into
your boring everyday
life?

WISE

No.

FLOWER

So, just the
position of the
school headmaster?

WISE

Just that...

FLOWER

(stands up and gives a low,
old-fashioned bow)
Then let me express
my heartfelt
gratitude to you.
You are an amazing
man. With your
generous refusal,
you make me owe you
but I'm such an
eternal debtor, who
cannot even pay you
in infinity. By your
one word, "only",
you freed me from
captivity, in which
I've been for more
than thirty
centuries. I assure
you that during our
short, one-and-a-
half minute
acquaintance, I've
liked you very much.
You are a good,
funny and pure
person. And let the
one, whose name
nobody calls, keep
you. So, are you
ready? Aren't you
afraid?

WISE

I'm a little but
please, speak.

Flower lights up a pocket lighter and hands it to
Wise.

FLOWER

When it lights up,
say the formula.

WISE

But wait. This is...
a new spell... Won't
it entail any new
grief for me? Won't
it turn me into some
animal or maybe
suddenly deprive me
of my memory or
ability to speak?
I'm not afraid but I
want to know for
sure.

FLOWER

No. I swear by the
seal. No harm, no
pain, no
disappointment.

WISE

Afro-Amestigon.

The dying piece of paper has not yet burned down when a phenomenon that he has seen many times before in cinema, during a continuous change of pictures, begins to happen before Wise.

Everything in the room begins to discolor as well, fades in watery, flashing shivering, thins and disappears: the curtains at the doors, carpets, window curtains, furniture, wallpaper. And at the same time, through them, from a distance, coming closer and becoming clearer, the corollas appear - green with pink, Japanese screens, a familiar window with tulle curtains and every moment is asserted in the familiar sweet simplicity. Someone knocks evenly, loudly and aggressively behind the wall. Like a working engine.

Wise sees himself but this time, he's really in his old, familiar room. Someone has been knocking on the door for some time.

Wise is barefoot. He opens the door. His colleagues enter the room. They are drunk with a messy morning intoxication and they were the ones, rhythmically banging on the door. They walk in, staggering, ugly, shaggy, swollen and in a terrible chorus, they sing stupid street couplets they wrote together.

Morrow dances and waves the newspaper, in which it is clearly printed that Sam Wise was appointed the school headmaster.

MORROW

Drinks and food are
on you.

WISE

Done...

While he's getting dressed to go to the restaurant, Wise is surprised to find on his desk a few twigs of blossoming lilac, stuck in a cheap porcelain vase. The flowers are early, artificially driven out, almost odorless or, rather, with the faint smell of gasoline, of which greenhouse lilacs always smell.

Next to the vase is Wise's notebook, opened in the middle. Both pages are completely scribbled with the same picture - the hexagonal "Star of Solomon." The drawings are made in a hurry - carelessly, ugly, slovenly as if they were done with closed eyes or in the dark or while drunk.

Wise cannot remember, who and when drew in his book. He himself didn't do this - that he knows for sure.

INT. RESTAURANT, EVENING

Inadvertently lowering the fingers of his left hand into his waistcoat pocket, Wise feels around in it for some kind of small solid object. Pulling it out, he sees a square ivory plate with a beautifully carved Latin letter S, circled outside, on the edges, with thin silver lines and painted over with shiny black enamel.

Wise recognizes this little thing. He saw such plates with letters last night in his dream. But how it got in his pocket, Wise can't imagine.

Morrow, seeing the square in Wise's hand, becomes interested in it and asks for that little, elegant thing.

MORROW

It's just like it
was made for me. The
first letter of my
last name.

Wise willingly gives it away and he sees Morrow put it in his wallet.

But when Morrow wants to look at it again after three minutes, it's no longer there. Nor it's on the floor.

Amid these searches, Morrow suddenly leans back in his chair, slaps himself on the forehead and stares with wide eyes at Wise.

MORROW

I actually saw you
today in a dream!
You were sitting in
the most beautiful
cabinet like some
kind of minister or
von baron and, to
put it in a
reporter's language,
"were sinking in a
Voltaire chair." And
I was asking you to
lend me a hundred
thousand dollars.
Tell me, please,
what kind of
nonsense is that?
Huh?

WISE
(embarrassed, smiles shyly,
lowers his eyes)
Yes, it happens...

But the deepest and most amazing memory of a strange dream will come to Wise in a few days.

EXT. RACE TRACK, DAY

Wise goes to horseracing. With indifferent eyes, he watches the galloping horses, the jockeys in the swelling silk multi-colored shirts, the excitement of the dressed up crowd, overflowing the tribunes.

During one race, he turns back and sees Emily Short in the box, directly against himself.

Emily Short, slightly bending down to the barrier of the box, looks at him from above, without stopping, with close, amazed eyes, a half-open mouth, noticeably turning pale from excitement.

Wise cannot stand her gaze, turns away and his heart begins to race with pain.

During the intermission, a young handsome OFFICER approaches Wise and slightly touches his elbow.

OFFICER
Sorry, that lady is
asking you to come
to her box for a
minute. I'm
instructed to tell
you.

WISE
I'm listening, I'm
coming...

His legs feel heavy like stones and he walks along the wooden steps of the stairs. It seems to him that everyone at the racetrack is watching him. Confused in the aisles, he hardly finds the right box and, upon entering, awkwardly bows.

It is her. Only she alone can be so beautiful, pure and sunny, all in a magical glow of an unforgettable dream. All the smallest lines of her thin eyelids, eyelashes and eyebrows are outlined with amazing clarity and her dark eyes are shining with passion, curiosity and fear. She shows Wise the chair in front of her.

SHORT

Sorry for disturbing you. But there was something incredibly familiar in your face.

WISE

Are you Emily Short?

SHORT

No. My name is Anna. And your name is not Johnny?

WISE

No. Sam Wise.

SHORT

But I saw you, I saw you... Was it on the railroad? At the station?

WISE

Yes. Two trains stood nearby. Window to window...

SHORT

Yes. And I was wearing a gray coat, embroidered with silk here, on the collar and along the folds...

WISE

That's right. And a white blouse, and a white hat with pink flowers.

SHORT

How strange, how strange. And remember I had a bouquet of lilac in my hands?

WISE

Yes, I remember it well. When your train started moving, you threw it through the open window.

SHORT

Yes, yes, yes! And the next morning...

WISE

The next morning, we met again. You took the wrong train by mistake and got into mine while they were moving... We met. You let me visit you at home. I remember your address...

SHORT

(shakes her head)
It's not that, not that. I invited you to stay with us. I'm not from here, just arrived yesterday and I'm leaving tomorrow.

This is my first
time in this city...
How unusual it all
is... There was
another man with
you, he had a
terrible face,
looked like
Mephistopheles...
Wait, his name...

WISE

Alba Flower!

SHORT

No, no. Not that.
Something
sonorous... Ah, I
don't remember...
And then we said
goodbye at the
station.

WISE

(in a whisper)
Yes. I still
remember shaking
your hand.

She continues to look at him carefully, slightly
tilting her head but sadness and disappointment are
seen deeper and deeper in her fading eyes.

SHORT

But you are not
him... It was a
dream. Unusual,
mysterious dream...
wonderful...
incomprehensible...

WISE

A dream is like an
echo.

She closes her eyes with her narrow, lovely palm and sits motionless for several seconds. Then immediately, as if waking up, straightens up and extends her hand to Wise.

SHORT

Goodbye. I won't see
you anymore. Sorry
to bother you. What
a pity!

Wise never meets this beautiful woman again. However, both of them continue seeing each other in their dreams - on the same nights and at the same time.

THE END

SATANELLA # 11

Screenplay

by

Sergey Mosienko



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