



By the Author of  
*Lady Windermere's Fan*

*A story game about desperate improvisation and egregious theatricality.*

by **Lara Turner**  
& ~~Oscar~~ **Wilde**

## It's opening night at the Westlake Theatre, and you are woefully unprepared to go on.

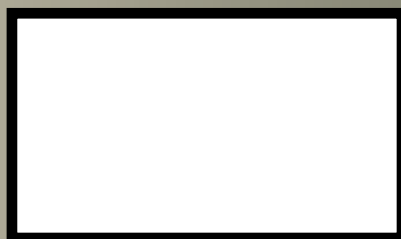
Due to a ludicrous level of mismanagement by the director and producer alike, your acting troupe has neglected to hold a single rehearsal. In fact, nobody's even bothered to get a script. All you know for sure is that you're meant to put on a comedy by the master of the Victorian farce, Oscar Wilde. With only that to go on, you're just going to have to improvise.

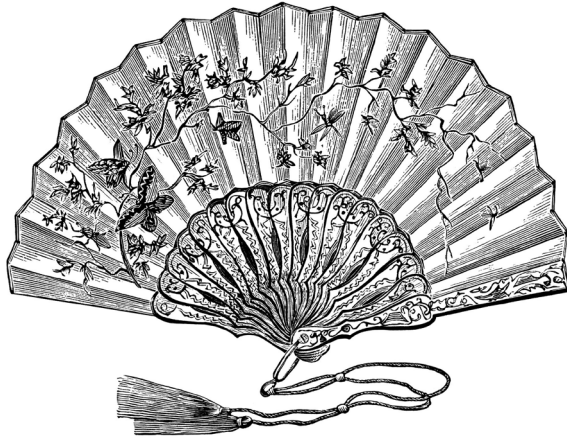
You're putting on a comedy of manners in the style of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *An Ideal Husband*, or *Lady Windermere's Fan*, so that means self-absorbed characters, complex webs of deception, and as many witty one-liners as you can think up while you do whatever it takes to prevent the show from grinding to a halt.

- Cobble together a coherent plot out of the mismatched sets you have on hand.
- Lie, cheat, and steal the spotlight through three acts of quick changes, missed cues, and *bon mots*.
- Do whatever you must to keep the audience's attention until the final curtain.
- Bask in the thunderous applause you so richly deserve.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan* is a role-playing game for three to five players, meant to be played over three to four hours, with no GM and no advanced preparation required. It's a standalone game written by Lara Turner (*The Aether Sea*, *Morts*, *Venture City*) inspired by the plays of Oscar Wilde (*The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *A House of Pomegranates*, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*).

**Ridiculous characters, improbable plots, and a breathless journey from the opening curtain to the final bows.**





By the Author of *Lady  
Windermere's Fan*



Written by ~~Lara Turner and Oscar Wilde~~

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

Writing/Layout: Lara Turner

System Development: Alexander Guerrero-Randall

Editing: The Crimson Quill (Mindy Conde & Natalie McDermott)

Copyright © 2017 Lara Turner (Formerly: Ed Turner). Updated in 2020  
to change my name. All rights reserved.

GlaiveGuisarme.com

Digital Edition.

All images in this document are taken from public domain sources.

Oscar Wilde's plays and other writings are in the public domain.

Use of and reference to public domain works does not imply the endorsement of the original creators or their estates.

This is a game about making up a ridiculous farce. Characters and events described here (with the exception of Oscar Wilde himself) are fictitious, and any resemblance to real people, living or dead or pretending to be dead as part of an overelaborate scheme, is entirely coincidental.

“Actors are so fortunate. They can choose whether they will appear in tragedy or in comedy, whether they will suffer or make merry, laugh or shed tears. But in real life it is different. Most men and women are forced to perform parts for which they have no qualifications. Our Guildensterns play Hamlet for us, and our Hamlets have to jest like Prince Hal. The world is a stage, but the play is badly cast.”

— Oscar Wilde, *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime and Other Stories*

# CONTENTS

Introduction	1
About This Game	7
Using This Book	7
What You Will Need	9
What Is a Story Game?	9
Who Is Oscar Wilde?	10
What Is a Play?	11
About This Book	12
Setting Up	15
Sets and Setting	15
Discovering the Sets	16
Determining a Setting	17
Main Characters	20
Concept	21
Vice (or Virtue)	22
Tragic History	22
Relationships	24
Name and Costume	25
Character Arcs	27
Lie	27
Happy Ending	29
Props	30
Minor Characters	32
Final Steps	33
Preparing to Act	37
The Fourth Wall	38
Basic Stagecraft	38

Onstage, Offstage	42
Onstage	42
Offstage	44
Audience Favour	46
Losing Favour	46
Gaining Favour	47
Performing the Play	51
Before Each Act	51
During an Act	52
The Spotlight	53
Spotlight Scenes	53
Escalation	54
Passing the Spotlight	56
Ending an Act	56
Intermission	59
Happy Endings	60
Curtain Call	62
Playbills	65
A Theatrical Engagement	68
The Florentine	74
Faerie Scholars	80
A Bite at the Castle	86
Nothing Much at All	92
Pater Familias	98
Jaunty Lads a-Sailing	104
The Wedding Party	110
Casting Call	117
Rules Summary	128
Character Sheet	130
Epilogue	133
Patrons of the Arts	136
Illustration Credits	140
Index	142



**By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan**

**Characters:**

The Producer

The Director

The Lead

Various Actors and Stagehands

**Time:**

The Present

First Act

[Scene: Backstage at the Westland Theatre Company. The room is cluttered with mismatched tables, themselves cluttered with props and bits of costume and scenery coming from dozens of different plays.]

[The **Actors and Stagehands** are seated at the tables, talking quietly. The **Lead** and the **Director** are at a table centre stage, playing cards. After a moment, the **Producer** enters.]

**Producer:** [Claps loudly.] Attention! Attention, ladies and gentlemen and actors! This is your producer speaking, and I have an important announcement.

[The crew looks to the **Producer**, who smiles nervously.]

**Producer:** Excellent. Well then. Hello. [Pauses.] Ah. Hm. There's been a bit of a miscommunication.

**Director:** What sort of miscommunication?

**Producer:** A most serious one.

**Director:** I see. Would you like to be more specific on this?

**Producer:** I'd rather not, to be brutally honest.

**Lead:** That's all well and good; I often find that too much communication is detrimental to the acting process. At any rate, we're quite busy. [Begins dealing out cards.]

**Producer:** But I must. It seems that, in one of those freak occurrences for which no one need find fault, theatre management has come to believe that opening night is not in one month's time but, ah, tonight.

[The **Actors** and **Stagehands** gasp, alarmed.]

**Director:** What? Well that won't do. My actors are completely unprepared!

**Producer:** I have every confidence in your skills as a director. You've had weeks to rehearse thus far; surely you've got the general cut and thrust of the play down.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

**Director:** We must cancel.

**Producer:** Not an option. The fliers were posted, the vendors were contacted. The box seats, my friend, have been sold.

**Lead:** What, all of them?

**Producer:** It is poised to be a full house.

**Lead:** A full house! How exciting.

**Director:** Good lord! I shall be a laughingstock!

**Lead:** Yes, but before a full house. We might be fools, but we shall be grand fools.

**Producer:** [Looks at a watch.] The curtain opens in two hours, everybody.

[The **Producer** leaves. After a moment, and with extreme reluctance, the **Director** stands to address the company.]

**Director:** I suppose it's on me to get us on our feet. So. Does anyone have their script on hand? I seem to have forgotten mine. [After a pause.] Perhaps we have a copy sitting around somewhere?

[Silence from the company. Eventually, reluctantly, the **Lead** speaks up.]

**Lead:** If you'll recall, at our first meeting you said that picking up the scripts too early in the process ran a very real risk of

overwhelming actors with the urge to do work. Then we all went to a pub for the evening.

**Director:** That sounds about right. Follow up question: does anyone remember what play we're meant to be performing?

[A pause. The company shrugs and mumbles various lines in the theme of "no."]

**Director:** Oh dear. Oh, we are doomed. Doomed!

[The Producer enters, with a flier].

**Producer:** One last interruption, everybody.

**Director:** [Animated and exaggerated] -and that's the blocking to keep in mind for act two! Oh, welcome back; have you gotten opening night delayed?

**Producer:** No, so sorry, but I thought you might like to see the fliers that have been put up. [Passes the flier to the **Director**.]

**Director:** [Reading] The Westland Theatre Company is proud to present... a little known play from the later canon of Oscar Wilde. We're doing a Wilde?

**Producer:** You seem surprised.

**Director:** Of course not. Simply elated. Will you be attending the show?

**Producer:** I should think not. I don't care for the theatre. I find dramas exhausting, and comedies tiring. No, I shall be dining with

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

family tonight, where the acting is no worse but the chairs are more comfortable. Break legs, everyone.

[The **Producer** leaves].

**Director:** Oh, thank goodness. It's a Wilde, everybody. We're doing an Oscar Wilde farce. I don't know what the title is, the flier is really selling this on name recognition alone, but still, it's a Wilde.

**Lead:** Are we less doomed than we were a few moments ago?

**Director:** We are hardly doomed at all. I won't pretend we don't have work ahead of us, but, friends, it's a farce. Three acts of self-absorbed twits forced into untenable situations of their own making. We will simply fake it.

**Lead:** You seem confident.

**Director:** Confidence is the crutch of the terminally untalented. We are going to be cunning, which has much more staying power. Come, let's make our way to the wings, and see what sort of play we can assemble. We will look like fools, of course, but we'll be grand fools.

[The **Director** exits, followed shortly by the remainder of the company.]

Act Drop





## ABOUT THIS GAME

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan* is a story game which puts its players in the roles of actors who, through an astonishing level of theatrical mismanagement, have reached opening night without having bothered to hold a single rehearsal or even pick up scripts for the play they're supposed to be performing. Luckily, they know it was written by Oscar Wilde, which gives them just enough information to fake their way through three acts.

To that end, this is a game which simulates both the structures of a farce and the desperation of being onstage without a clue what to do next.

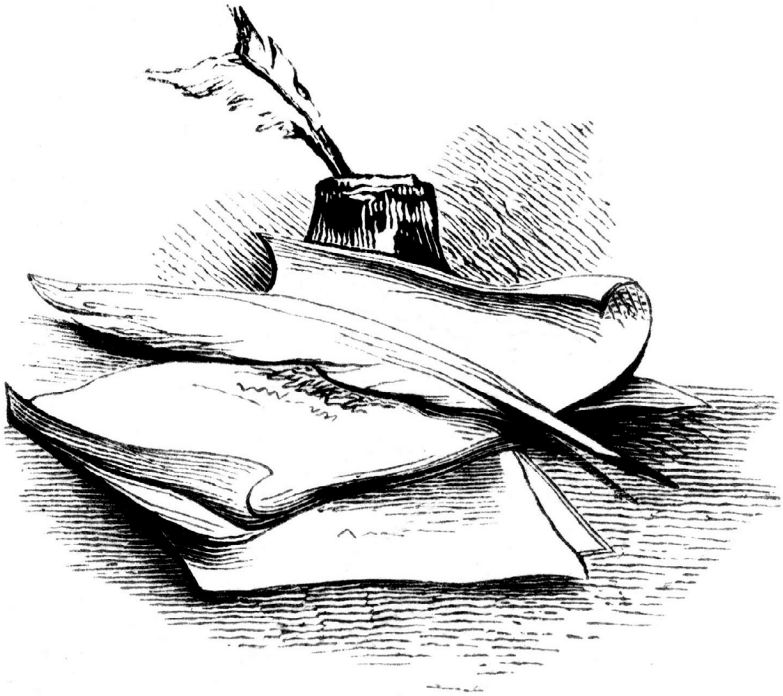
## USING THIS BOOK

This book is divided into a few large sections. The first three chapters, Backstage, In the Wings, and On Stage, describe what you need to know to play the game. Respectively, they're about setting up the characters and the plot, the basic rules of the game, and the structure of the performance itself. These are the important chapters; should you find yourself escaping a fire and only able to save three-fifths of a book, these are the chapters to save.

The next chapter, Playbills, provides setting and character seeds from several potential plays. This is entirely optional material; useful as a quick start if you don't want to go through the complete setup, or just as a source of inspiration.

Casting Call, the next chapter, contains rules and roles for generating “actor” characters. That is to say, rather than simply portraying characters in the farce, these rules allow you to portray the actor who is portraying a character, slightly complicating the proceedings. It is entirely optional, but fun if you are in the mood for it.

Oh, and in the back of this book, you’ll also find a convenient one-page rules-summary, character sheets, an index... the expected game detritus.



*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

## What You Will Need

First of all, you'll need players. Three to five is a reasonable spread; too few and the action won't be sufficiently chaotic. Too many and the play will go on too long. Six players can just about work, though at that point you might as well run two three-player plays.

Secondly, a place to gather. A table, and comfortable chairs, which shall be your stage for the next, oh, three hours or so. Snacks. Champagne. The basics.

You will need character sheets for your main characters, one per player. These can be found at the end of this book and copied by whatever method you find convenient.

You will need index cards, a number of them. Eight at least per player. Substitute small scraps of paper or sticky notes in times of desperation.

You will need Audience Favour tokens: small tokens in great quantity. Glass beads are ideal for such a purpose, but coins or poker chips would suffice. About ten per player will be more than enough.

Finally, you will need the Spotlight token: a single, easily-visible item which can be passed from player to player with ease. Just about anything will do: a silver candlestick, a flashlight, a green plastic Tyrannosaurus rex, anything. An ideal Spotlight token happens to be a paper fan, not unlike *Lady Windermere's*: light, portable, highly visible when it's opened and easy to hand off when closed.

## What Is a Story Game?

A style of tabletop role-playing game, or RPG. Broadly speaking, RPGs are games which allow a player or players to create narratives; rather than playing to win the game, you all play to craft an entertaining story. The rules are in place both to push the narrative into specific directions, and to ensure that all the players can have a meaningful impact on the story as it's being told.

“Story games” are a vaguely-defined subset of RPGs which tend to focus on rules which facilitate a certain narrative tone rather than codifying actions of characters. In other words, while traditional RPGs have rules that say what a character can and cannot do and usually have one player in charge of the broader arc of the story, story games have rules which say where the narrative will go and generally give players equal creative input along that path.

Of course, that’s a very broad definition. The best way to learn what an RPG is like is to find a group and play. *By The Author of Lady Windermere’s Fan* is very much a story game, which has been built to facilitate a very specific style of narrative, culled from the plays of Oscar Wilde.



### Who Is Oscar Wilde?

Perhaps the most famous voice of the Victorian era. Oscar Wilde was an Irish playwright, author, and poet. And essayist. And wit. And many other things besides, as long as they required a clever mind and not a lot of physical labour. In terms of sheer quotability, Wilde ranks with Mark Twain and Winston Churchill.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere’s Fan*

This game is based off of Wilde's plays, which he wrote toward the end of his career; this includes *Lady Windermere's Fan*, of course, *A Woman of No Importance*, *An Ideal Husband*, and his most well-known and well-loved work: *The Importance of Being Earnest*. These are all farces: broad comedies about people doing foolish things for foolish reasons, and ultimately causing themselves a great deal of embarrassment. Wilde is remembered as much for his biting satire of the British upper classes as he is for his well-honed one-liners.

## What Is a Play?

A play is a fictional medium in which one or more performers, possibly aided by an orchestra or chorus, recite dialog in front of a live audience in order to create a narrative. In most instances, the performers are aided in their task by sets, costumes, and props which serve the needs of the ongoing story.

And yet, that is a very basic description. As an actor, it's a chaotic, exhilarating thing... an elaborate dance between dozens of individuals, aware that if they miss a step, the entire show might collapse. To the audience, meanwhile, it is an intense experience, where the emotions wrought by the narrative are enhanced by the live nature of the performance. Not only do you share the experience with dozens or hundreds of other viewers, but there is a subtle conversation happening: your reactions to the actors influence their performance in powerful ways... the more you laugh, the funnier the actors get.

A play is one of the few forms of magic which are left in an otherwise thoroughly mundane world.



Incidentally, if you've read the last three headings straight through, then congratulations for getting this far! One can only wonder what made you pick up a story game about Oscar Wilde plays. Perhaps the front cover was written in a very enticing font.

## WHY THE AUTHOR OF LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN?

Do you mean why does this game need to exist, or why the focus on Wilde, or why is it titled as it is?

Well, let me cover them all. This book exists because I love plays, and remember with great fondness my time in school and community theatre, and regret that it's not something that I can participate in as readily as I once did. To some degree, story games cover a lot of the same ground... being creative with other people, forging a narrative that gives everyone a part to play. But what it lacks is, for want of a better way to put it, the sheer terror. The need to push forward not simply because that is the destination, but because a failure to move spells disaster. This is a game which aims to replicate that specific aspect of acting... the adrenaline rush that comes from running with the avalanche all the way to the final bows.

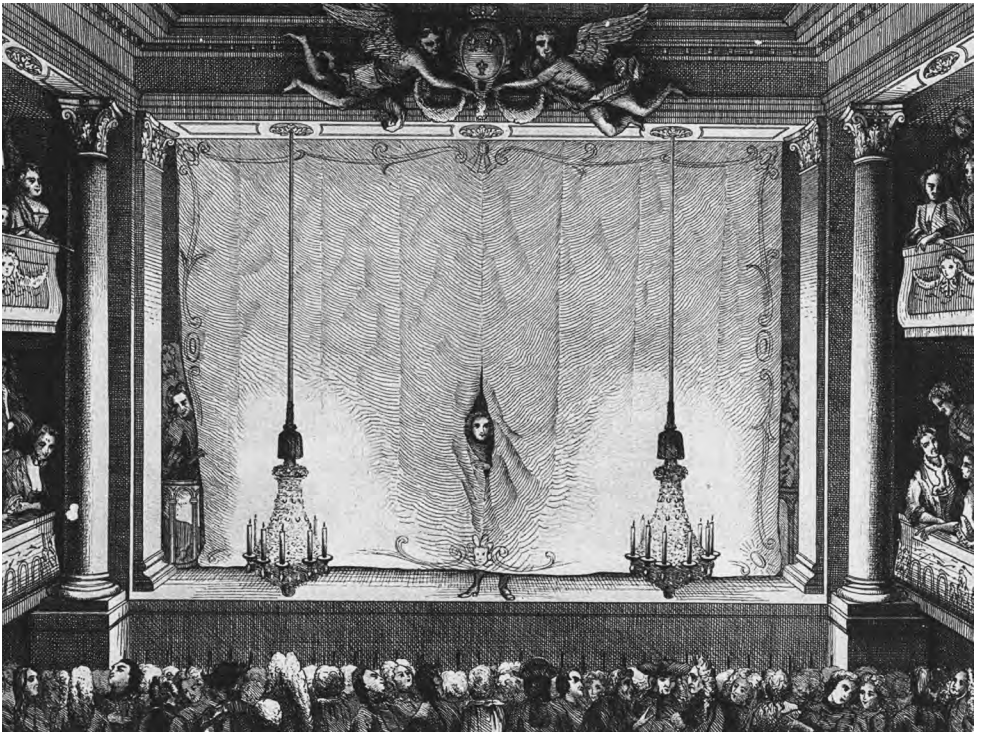
Oscar Wilde on the one hand is as good a choice as any for a backbone for this sort of thing... he doesn't require you improvise in iambic pentameter, and the nature of a farce means that you are very able to roll with disaster. On another hand, Wilde's involvement was a happy accident; the earliest draft of this game was written for the Game Chef design contest in 2014. The central theme of the game had to reflect the phrase "There is no book" and among the optional thematic ingredients was the word "wild." I thought that using a wilful misspelling of that was charming. I got some very pointed feedback from a judge who did not find it charming in the least. Such is life.

As for the title, it is a small reference to a very dark time in Wilde's life. Wilde was in a homosexual relationship at a time and place where such things were illegal. While *The Importance of Being Earnest* was drawing crowds, and Wilde was at his most successful, the relationship became public, and he was imprisoned for it... two years' hard labour, followed by a voluntary exile to France where he died alone and penniless shortly after. Most English publishers refused to work with him, due to the scandal of it all. When the script for *The Importance of Being Earnest* was finally published, it was only under the condition that

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

Wilde's name be left off entirely, with the only attribution being that the play was written by the author of *Lady Windermere's Fan*.

... it's a lamentable story, to be sure. This game exists, in no small part, as a celebration of innumerable plays which Wilde would never get a chance to write.



### *Director's Notes: Teaching the Game*

If you are introducing first-time players to *By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan* (or if, indeed, you are a first-time player as well), the easiest way to move through setup is in stages. Read the contents of each header aloud, ignoring sidebars and example text. Pause so that everyone can write down whatever needs to be written down, share what you have created amongst yourselves, and then move on to the next header. Pass the book each time you move to a new header, so that everyone gets a chance to perform.

This will result in a non-trivial increase in the time setup takes, but it will also keep everyone on the same page throughout. Also, this gives everyone an opportunity to do their best Oscar Wilde impression. Do attempt to one-up one another. That's all in the spirit of the theatre.



## BACKSTAGE: SETTING UP

If the posters out front are to be believed, the audience will be arriving in mere moments, expecting to be entertained. You, players, are now tasked with throwing together the skeleton of a play based on instinct, intuition, and the things you happen to have on hand. There's not much time to prepare, but you can at least get some items put together; by the time the curtain goes up, you won't know how the play will run, but you shall at least have an idea where to start.

## SETS AND SETTING

One of the most essential arts of modern theatre is the construction of sets. A callous and unromantic soul would define a "set" as the furniture and painted backdrops which are placed upon an otherwise barren stage, making it resemble a location relevant to the story being told. But at its heart, what a set truly is, is a window into a new world.

Some sets are lavishly detailed affairs, as accurate to reality as can be done with just three walls; others are of a heightened character: extravagantly supernatural, to render the audience excited, sombre, amused, or otherwise entranced. Even seemingly simple sets are not so simple... hours of thought are poured into the precise placement of blank walls and lone spotlights. A set, at its best, is physical poetry.

We don't have the time to construct fresh sets. We shall have to make do with what we have on hand already, and construct a play to fit. It is fortunate that our company has a sizable back room: sets for the last several plays we've put on are still hiding in the wings, and we can re-use them.

## Discovering the Sets

Every player takes a pair of index cards; write “SET” in big, clear letters on the top edge of each. **Without discussing anything with one another**, write down brief descriptions of one or two different sets which are currently lurking in the wings of this theatre, one per card. Do this individually, without comparing the sets with one another, or even talking about what genre the play will be.

Set descriptions are a sentence or two, intended to give the general idea of what the set looks like: something like “The sitting room of an upscale London flat, overlooking Half-Moon Street. The room is luxurious and artistically furnished.” You may elaborate on the description with a few specifics, but the broad tone is what’s most important.

Though it’s not required, you are encouraged to suggest what play this set may have originally come from. This will help suggest subtleties in the set’s tone. The living room from a production of *Hairspray*,



*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

for instance, will feel quite different indeed to the living room from *The Cherry Orchard*, even though the furniture will be much the same.

The works of Oscar Wilde generally concerned themselves with the English upper-class of the late Victorian era, but this need not be the case for tonight's play. Perhaps Wilde's later, unknown plays mixed things up with fantasy, science fiction, or even more unusual trappings.

Your theatre company has performed plays in every genre imaginable, and you are terrible at striking sets in a timely fashion, so elven kingdoms and futuristic cities and Samuel Beckett's wastelands are all at your disposal. Make sure these are sets you are interested in spending time in. This is your first chance to guide the development of the play, so if you have some sort of genre interest, make a set for it.



Once the sets have been created and shared, move on.

*Let us call our hypothetical player of By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan... Sebastian Melmoth. Sebastian, lacking a great creative spirit thus far, writes down only one set: "The garden of a manor house in the country. There are chairs and a table set beneath a large yew-tree. An endlessly re-purposed set, most recently doing time in Act I of Uncle Vanya."*

*Hardly exciting, but perfectly serviceable.*

#### **Director's Notes: Why can't we talk about sets?**

If you were constructing a play from scratch, it would make sense to have a discussion of what genre you shall be working in. But this game is meant to emulate the process of creating a play from the components which happen to be lying around; that means cobbling together ideas that don't necessarily make sense with one another. To do that, you must eschew collaboration for this particular step. Thus, when you realize that the sets at your disposal are a restaurant kitchen, feudal Japan, and the moon, your ability to work them into a cohesive whole will be all the more impressive.

## Determining a Setting

Once everyone has shared their sets, you will come together to determine the setting of the play. What sort of play will you be able to put together with the sets on hand? If one player found the deck of the *HMS Pinafore*, and another tracked down some seedy office from *City of Angels*, and still another a stretch of tropical beach from *South Pacific*, then you must collectively determine what sort of plot can

### *Director's Notes: Victorian Social Mores*

In the era in which Wilde wrote, society was dominated by an inordinately complex network of rules about what was appropriate, legal, and disallowed but politely ignored by society. This play, however, will be a work of fiction, which means that it need not accurately reflect the social stigmas ingrained in Victorian England. Nor, indeed, does it need to reflect the stigmas of the present.

This is to say, players are explicitly free to ignore the biases and bigotries of the real world as they construct their play. Oscar may have had to bear in mind the societally-enforced restrictions of race, class, gender, sexuality, et cetera. You do not.

This doesn't mean that your play exists in a world without social mores, but as in the real world, they are fundamentally arbitrary. A marriage between two people of the same sex may well be scandalous, not because they're gay, but because one of them works for the government and the other wears entirely unstylish trousers. An unacceptable match! A woman who beds many suitors is shocking not because of arcane expectations about a woman's chastity, but rather because she arrives at her lovers' homes without phoning ahead. A violation of basic propriety! And so on, in that fashion.

The greater point is that all players should be comfortable with the setting and characters they are creating. This is, after all, a comedy, and if a player is forced to confront issues they would rather avoid, then they will not be having a good time. And that is not okay. If you need to have a conversation about what is or is not on the table, now is the time.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

be constructed from these components. Perhaps a detective is hired to track a target, follows him onto a ship, which wrecks on an island. Perhaps the inhabitants of an island take a journey by boat to the big city to talk to a book publisher. Something along those lines. Don't get too specific: you are seeking only the broadest, vaguest intimations of the story which you are going to perform.

The play will be three acts long, and each act will require a different set. To that end, you will almost certainly have more sets available than you will be able to use. Keep three, at a minimum, and stack them neatly in the middle of the table. If there are more than three sets that work well together, you may keep them in the stack as well, to give you more options as the play develops. Sets that you know will not fit may be safely discarded.

While you are encouraged to rush through most of character creation, determining the setting is an important step, so take as much time as you need. By the end, all players should be happy with the setting. If no accord can be reached, then start again; discard all the sets you found previously as unusable, and discover a fresh group.



Only after everyone is content with the setting may you move on.

*In addition to Sebastian's country garden setting, the sets created by the other players include a fashionable London apartment's sitting room, and a fairly ornate dining room. Sebastian and the other players conclude that they could tell a story about wealthy people who travel between the city and the country, lampooning the differences between urban and rural folk. Sebastian suggests that some may even be living false lives and false identities on their travels. The other players quickly agree, and a setting is decided upon: this is a contemporary story about people putting on false identities as they travel between London and the country.*

## MAIN CHARACTERS

While a set may be the beating heart of a play, the characters are its soul, at least until such a point as a mad genius trains a chair to recite a monologue. Players, each one of you will create a Main Character to portray; this is someone who the audience will, in theory, care about, and who will get their own character arc over the course of three acts, culminating, as it must, in a happy ending.

Every player begins with one character sheet; any proper backstage should have dozens of the things cluttering up the shelves, but if you don't have any on hand, they can be found at the back of this book.

There are a few different steps to creating a character, and you will all go through them more-or-less together. Everyone shares what they've come up with for one phase before moving on to the next. Call it semi-collaborative: your character is your own, but the players can offer suggestions and draw inspiration from one another. Fair warning: it's easy to turn character generation into a time-consuming rabbit hole, but the clock is ticking ever onward! If a stage of creation has taken you more than about five minutes, it has gone on too long, and you should collectively move onward, because a half-considered character is more appealing to an audience than one who never makes it to the stage.

### Concept

Begin by envisioning someone who makes sense in the setting you've decided upon. Describe them in a sentence, at the most. You might be "A wealthy young playboy," "A prim-and-proper governess," "The mighty chief of the sasquaches," or something along those lines. You know, depending on genre conventions. Make sure there are a variety of character concepts among the players. It's perfectly valid for two players to have similar concepts; however that's usually only funny if their similarities are contrasted with a set of very different companions.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*



There are few rules for what makes a good character concept; if we are to hew very close to Wilde's published works, then you'll all want to be some variety of idle upper-class twit. But that need not be the case. What is necessary is this: all of the main characters in this play take themselves seriously. The action of the play will make your characters look like fools, and fools are only funny when they are too proud to accept looking foolish. Regardless of anything else, your characters are self-interested and proud indeed.



When everyone has decided upon a concept for their character, move on.

*Sebastian decides that his character will be a "Respectable country gentleman." After a moment's thought, he worries about his ability to act respectably, so changes it to "Seemingly-respectable country gentleman."*

## Vice (or Virtue)

Every main character has a vice. Or a virtue. There's no real difference between the two. This is a thing that they care about, perhaps more than they ought, and which the other characters don't particularly approve of. Gluttony or avarice are popular, if general, choices, but anything that your character takes too much interest in is a viable vice. Perhaps they write novels, or they light fires, or they give food to the poor and downtrodden.

Ultimately, a vice (or virtue) is just a fact about the character which makes them marginally more interesting than a mannequin—when a scene begins to drag, the vice is something that you can bring up in order to give your character some sort of ready motivation.



When everyone has decided upon a vice (or, if they must, a virtue), move on.

*For a vice, Sebastian decides to lean into the false-identity theme he's so oddly intent on. His character is driven to pretend to be a Londoner. He imagines the country gentleman abandoning his estate once a month or so, intent on getting into big-city mischief.*

## Tragic History

Every character has a history, and every history is tragic, and every tragic history is equally tragic. Perhaps you lost a child in the war, or you lost your hat in a cab, or you are the actual devil. Doesn't matter. Your tragic history, like your vice, is something that differentiates your character and can be used as a backbone for playing your role, but while your vice is a public failing, your tragic history is more private. It's useful for a quick injection of pathos into a flagging scene. On the other hand, it may never come up at all, and simply exist in the subtext beneath the play, much like the iceberg upon which Hemingway did all of his writing.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*



When everyone has decided upon their tragic history, take a few seconds to bemoan your unfair lot in this life, then move on.

*As a tragic history, Sebastian decides that his character is an orphan, and foundling. Sebastian thinks this is tragic less because of the heartbreak of losing a family, and more because of society's uptight obsessions with heritage, something that this character cannot prove or provide.*



## Relationships

In a well-made play, all of the characters know one another well before the action begins. To that end, we will establish a circle of relationships among the main characters. Consider the player to your left. Your character knows theirs, at least reasonably well. The relationship may be friendly or adversarial or, preferably, some mixture of both. You decide on the nature of that relationship, although that player may, as necessary, suggest tweaks or veto something they find too troubling.

Likewise, the player to your right will suggest the relationship between their character and yours. Because the web of relationships is so important to the functioning of a play, and because the process will require a little more direct collaboration than the other stages of character creation, you all may take a little more time on this than you might for any other stage. All the same, if you find that it's been more than fifteen minutes, then wrap things up and move on.



When a complete circle of relationships has been formed, or you've grown fed up and simply decided to make everyone a secret lover to everyone else, move on.

*Sebastian considers the players to either side of him. On his left is a Londoner, who is gluttonous but possesses a romantic heart he tries to keep hidden. Sebastian immediately thinks they should be long-term partners in mischief, and establishes that as their relationship. To Sebastian's right is a virtuous upper-class lady, who is opinionated and suffers under an overbearing mother; that player suggests that she and Sebastian's character could be married, but Sebastian is reluctant to be too tied down, given his travels to and from London. He suggests that they be merely in love, mutual but un-acted upon. This gives more opportunities for drama and comedy, and the other player agrees.*

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

## Name and Costume

Give your character a name. It should probably be different than that of any other character, but honestly that's not worth worrying overmuch about.

More importantly, decide on what your character will be wearing. After all, that is how the audience will recognize you. A theatre never throws away a piece of costuming if they can possibly help it. Clothes are made for adaptation and re-use, so any given ball-gown will have a long and healthy lifetime of being let in, let out, mixed, matched, patched, dyed, tied, cut-and-dried, draped artfully over a sofa and finally, a thousand wearings later, carefully hung up just in case someone needs to play Miss Havisham next season.

Knowing that, it is no surprise to realize that virtually any sort of costume can be dredged out of the back room, regardless of what the nature of your play will be. There's a suit of armour left over from the production of *Man of La Mancha*, a cabinet of *Cabaret* clothes, suits for *Guy*s and dresses for *Dolls*, and even a trunk full of giant monster outfits used for a particularly ill-considered production of *King Lear*. Rest assured, whatever mad bit of kit you want to dress in is back there somewhere.

Regarding costumes: nuance is not your friend here. The people in the back rows will not see the lovingly hand-crafted filigree about the edge of your diamond brooch, but they might notice that you're wearing a bright purple cape. Select a few big and obvious pieces of costume. Leave the nuance to the imagination.



If you, as a player, happen to have on hand some clothing that matches your character's costume, now would be a good time to put it on. Just to cement the mood.



When you are all in costume and looking fabulous, it's time to move on to generating your character arcs.

*Now equipped with a vice, tragic history, and two relationships, Sebastian gives a name to his character: Jack Worthing. There's a half-considered series of puns in there about "worthiness" that Sebastian might play with... but might not. For a costume, a well-tailored suit, a top hat that's a bit unstylish but would suit a justice of the peace out in, say, Hertfordshire, and those thin wire glasses which should make a man look clever but generally just make him look cross. Perfect.*



*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

## CHARACTER ARCS

At the moment, this play doesn't have a plot. That's not a problem, because it's never going to get one. Rather, we're going to substitute a modicum of character development, applied to all of our main characters, granting the audience the illusion that there is an actual storyline.

To that end, there are two remaining boxes on your character sheet: the **Lie** and the **happy ending**. These are further attributes of your character, but they are distinct from the earlier stages of character creation, because they are mutable. Your vice and tragic history are eternal, but Lies and happy endings can, and will, change.

### Lie

A Lie is, quite simply, something that your character is lying about. More concretely, it is a falsehood your character has been maintaining for some time, perhaps hours or perhaps decades, and which they believe they **must** maintain in order to continue their present comfort and happiness. You the player may know that this is not true, but the character, at their core, believes that, should their Lie ever be revealed, they will lose everything that matters in their lives, or will have irreparable harm brought upon them.

Your character may tell a great many lies, but their capital-L Lie is foundational, and they will do anything to keep the truth from being discovered.

Some traditional Lies might involve what level of education you've actually received, or how noble your background is, or whether or not you're in love with some other character, but honestly, any act of fabrication can work. Indeed, there's something amusing about starting on the pettier end of things: whether or not you have a pet dog, whether you enjoy chocolate, or if you've actually read Hamlet. Over time, your Lie will escalate (see page 55 for more on that) so don't start off too grand. "I am the god-emperor of all known space and time" is a fine lie, but it might be a tad broad in scope for a Lie. At least for Act I.

*Director's Notes: In on the Lie*

Depending on the nature of your relationships with the other characters, people might be aware that your Lie is, in fact, a lie. They might know right from the start of the play, or come to be aware of it long before your Lie is ready to be exposed. It is perfectly reasonable to have a close friend who knows your secret, or a social rival who has the evidence necessary to out you. It's not necessary for your character to have wool thrown over the eyes of every individual in the world! The Lie is simply a public face which they are presenting.

If you are having trouble envisioning a Lie, consider your vice and tragic history: you may be trying to cover one of them up, or at least cover up the trouble that one of them has caused you.

For the purposes of clarity and consistency, always write down what the Lie *is*, rather than what you are lying to cover. For instance, if your character cannot read but is pretending they are able, their Lie would be something along the lines of “I can read!”

“I cannot actually read” is the Lie of someone who is only pretending to be illiterate. That doesn't make it bad—on the contrary, you can doubtless wring

some hilarity out of such an unusual fib—but it is essential that players stay on the same page with regards to what is or is not the truth.



When you have all settled on a Lie, move on.

*Sebastian decides to go all-in on false identities with his initial Lie: “I am Earnest Worthing, Jack's brother!” It's a stunning choice indeed, utterly indefensible in the long run, so Sebastian imagines it will produce plenty of comedy.*

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

## Happy Ending

This is what your character is building towards. It's the condition under which you know that you can end the play and leave the audience's hearts appropriately warmed. It may involve boundless wealth, or some evidence of respectability, or a marriage to one of the other characters (in which case their happy ending should be at least amenable to this outcome).

Technically you might be guiding the plot to ensure that your happy ending comes to pass, but on the whole, you're most likely to get it dumped into your lap at the end of Act III, having done nothing to earn it except make a prat of yourself in public. That's perfectly fine. "Unwarranted and barely-believable" is the nature of happy endings. All the same, consider it to be a guiding principle for your character, and you should at least make it clear that you'd be interested in it.

Now, because plays are living things, especially when they haven't been written down beforehand, your character may find that their wants and needs at the end of an act don't quite match the ones which they had at the beginning. Perhaps you didn't meet your true love until the midpoint of the play, or perhaps you simply had a better idea for a happy ending occur to you as soon as the curtain rose. Fortunately, these things can be changed, and during an intermission you will have the ability to alter your happy ending (see page 59 for more on how intermissions function).



When you have all planned out a happy ending that you will never actually deserve, your characters are complete, and it's time to move away from the world of main characters and into props.

*For a happy ending, Sebastian decides to go a bit simpler... he is in love with the character to his right, Gwendolyn, so his happy ending will be a marriage. Nothing wrong with a classic.*

## PROPS

The settings that you've pulled from the wings are sumptuous and convincing, but they're also made of painted canvas and balsa wood. They're fake, and the things in them do not work—appliances will not function, windows will not open, and while you could sit on the furniture it's not recommended if you've had a large lunch.

If you want to actually interact with something, it's going to have to be a **prop**. Anything which you may wish to carry or which has a function must be a prop. The set might include a piano, but it won't make a sound. A prop piano, however, can be played.



*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

Every player takes an index card and writes “PROP” at the top in big, clear letters. Then, write down a prop you might find useful. The props room here is immense, because theatrical tradition demands that the company outright refuse to throw anything away unless it’s actually posing someone direct mortal peril. Whatever you might imagine, you will either find an example of it in the prop room or enough raw material to make a convincing simulacrum.

Well... within reason. You won’t find a full Viking longship back there, though you might find the bow of one which you can poke in from the wings. The doors out of the props room are wide enough to accommodate a baby grand piano, so treat that as an effective upper limit.

As for the nature of the props, virtually anything can do, but if you’re pressed for ideas, something that relates to your Lie is always useful, as would be some physical token that represents your vice or one of your relationships. If that doesn’t help, know that a piece of correspondence can foster amusing misunderstandings, a rapier can generate cheap drama, and a bottle of scotch is handy if you tend to get thirsty on stage.



Once everyone has created a prop, toss them into a big slapdash pile in the centre of the table. Don’t even bother to straighten it up, because it’s not worth your time, and move on to the making your minor characters.

*Sebastian creates a cigarette case. Silver, well-made. If necessary, it could be treated as though it were engraved, which is a useful trait when one is bearing a false name.*

## MINOR CHARACTERS

We have a handful of major characters already decided, but since we aren't meant to be putting on a Pinter play, thank goodness, we're going to have to invest in some **minor characters** as well. These are the nonessential figures, the ones who push along the narrative but otherwise don't accomplish much, if anything.

Of course, you may notice that there are only three to five actors in this particular show, so there's going to be a measure of double-, triple-, or quadruple-casting. What fun!

Every player takes one last index card and folds it in half widthwise (that is to say, in the "hamburger" fashion). This creates a little standee card. Now decide on some minor character who has a close relationship to your own; this might be a relative, servant, lover, or something along those lines. On the front of the standee, write down the name, description, and costume of this ancillary character.

The name should be obvious enough. The description is, like your own main character's concept, something very brief; try to keep it under five words.

The costume is most important. During the course of this play, this character will be portrayed not just by one of you actors, but by any or all of you. So as not to baffle the audience, minor characters



*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

will have to be recognizable even if the person portraying them varies wildly in height, weight, skin tone, gender presentation, and number of heads. To that end, the best costumes consist of one or two incredibly ostentatious pieces, like a giant jewelled sceptre, a bright orange wig, or a gorilla mask.



Once everybody has their minor character set up, toss the standees into the centre of the table with the same casual disregard as you did the props, and prepare to wrap up this backstage portion of the play.

*Sebastian wants Jack to have something to tie him down to the “country” side of his life, so he invents Cecily, who is Jack’s ward. She’s young, naive, and romantic, and will wear the blondest, curliest wig they can find. He can’t imagine she’ll have much of a role to play in Act I, but hopefully there will be something interesting for her to do by Act II.*

## FINAL STEPS

You now have all the raw material that you need to craft a play: at least three sets and a setting, one well-defined main character per actor, complete with a ready-built character arc, and a pile of props and costume pieces for ancillary characters that may need to wander onstage.

If you haven’t already, fill out the upside-down lines at the top of your character sheet for your name and Lie. Fold your sheet to make a little name standee, which is very useful in allowing people to remember what to call you. Having accomplished this, you and the other players will now be an ensemble, nearly ready for an audience.

Each player must take one final index card and fold it lengthwise, in the “hot dog” fashion. Write “OFFSTAGE” in the biggest, boldest letters you can muster, and place it over main character’s name standee to indicate that you are, in fact, off the stage.

The final step in setup is very minor indeed, but essential: as a group, determine which character is of the highest social station. Go by whatever rubric makes the most sense for the genre you've selected. That player is going to be the subject of the first spotlight scene (see page 53); they hold onto the Spotlight token for the time being. In addition, every player takes three Audience Favour tokens (whose function is detailed on page 46).



If you feel you need to, you can take a few minutes to slather on some makeup, have a sip of actor's brandy or just take a pee—whatever your pre-show ritual might be. But when that's taken care of, it's time to hit the stage.

*Sebastian argues briefly that Jack is the most elevated of the characters, but the character to his left—his partner in mischief, named Algernon—argues that his being from the city means he has the advantage. Reluctantly, Sebastian agrees, and the Spotlight token is given to Algernon's player. Sebastian takes it in good grace, knowing that the Spotlight will be on him soon enough.*



### *Director's Notes: Teaching the Game*

While you could read this section aloud, it's neither as fun nor useful as it would be during setup. Instead, you the facilitator and presumptive game-owner of this game, should explain the gist of this section to your players. Here's a sample script that covers the bases:

---

Right now we're all offstage. [Point at your OFFSTAGE standee]. When you want to go onstage, you can go as your main character [Take off the "OFFSTAGE" standee, and point at your main character's name], or as a minor character [Grab any minor character standee and place it over your main character's].

While you're offstage, you can do offstage things, like making sound effects. You can also raise or lower the curtain by shouting "curtain!" While you're onstage, you have to be in character. You can say things like "I walk downstage centre and stop next to the sofa," but other than describing what you do, you need to talk in character, whichever character you currently are. No asking questions, no talking about what you want to happen, and no pausing. If you want to interact with a prop, then pick up that prop's card... but remember that you can only interact with a prop if you or someone else has actually brought it onstage.

[Indicate your Audience Favour tokens] If you call someone the wrong name, hesitate too much, or pretend to have a prop that you can't actually have, the audience gets mad. These are Audience Favour tokens. If you screw up, toss one on the pile. You get more Audience Favour tokens by making the audience laugh; if someone is particularly funny, pass them a token from the pile. Whoever has the most at the end gets a bonus so... you know... try and collect it.

---

After that, be sure to show by demonstration what your players need to do. When you first come on stage, describe your stage presence extravagantly. Reward someone with Audience Favour as soon as you find a chance to do so. If you're up to it, break character on purpose, just to demonstrate how to lose favour. Keep a rapid pace. Do some offstage shenanigans. If you can hit these essentials early in Act I, and do so confidently, the other players should follow your lead.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*



## IN THE WINGS: PREPARING TO ACT

The audience has filed in, seated themselves, and are even now pointedly staring at their wristwatches, saying things like “In my day, a show that said it started at seven o’clock would start at seven sharp!” This is a damned lie, of course, but there’s only so much patience out there and we mustn’t let it wear too thin, so we’ll only take a few more minutes to warm up before the curtain rises.

The prior chapter was all about how to set up the necessities for the play, and the next chapter is about how to run the play. This chapter is a brief but essential digression: a reminder from your director about how, precisely, to be an actor.



## THE FOURTH WALL

Let's be real for a moment. You aren't actually a theatre troupe desperately improvising a Wilde play. You are, in fact, a group of otherwise reasonable humans who have elected to play a game on the subject of improvising a Wilde play. You are merely pretending to be actors, which is a baffling concept but, one hopes, a fun evening.

This game works best when you buy into this unreal reality. Most role-playing games ask you to embody your character and try to believe in the physicality of your imaginary surroundings. Technically, this game is no different; however, your avatar in the game's world is not the Main Character you've created, but the bumbling actor. Your surroundings include the aspects of the set you've created, but the dominant feature is the proscenium arch and, beyond it, the thousands of eyes watching your every move. In short, you are pretending to be actors for this game, so you should pretend to be actors correctly.

### A Little Basic Stagecraft

If you're on the stage, facing the audience (which you should almost always be), then your left and right are stage left and stage right, respectively. Wander too far to stage left or stage right and you'll end up in the wings, offstage. Going upstage means walking away from the audience; go too far and you'll bump into the back wall. Downstage means closer to the audience. As a rule, characters who are downstage are more visible to the audience and feel more important. Walk far enough downstage and you'll stomp on the footlights or fall into the orchestra pit, which is not recommended unless you are absolutely certain that it'll get a laugh.

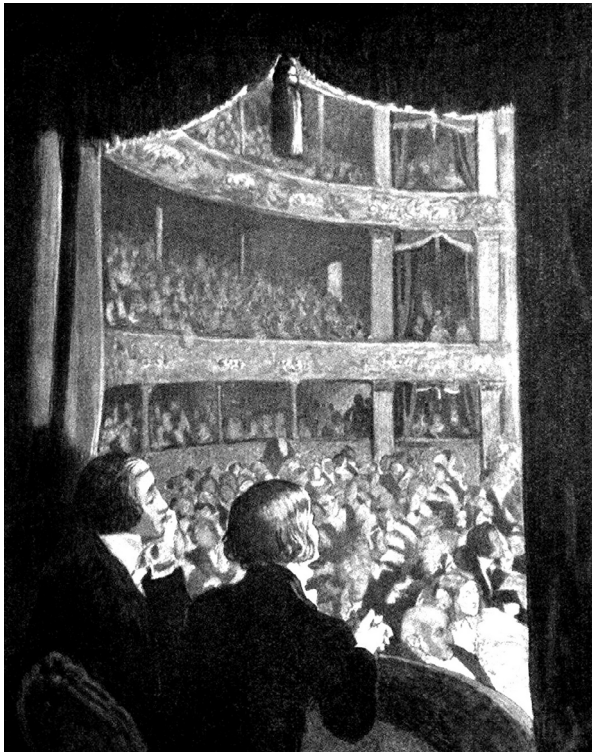
The proscenium arch is the large arch downstage, between the set and the audience. That's where the curtains are. There is a small portion of stage beyond the arch, often called the apron, which is very close to the audience and can be seen even when the curtains are closed. Activity that happens down there is either very important indeed—rousing speeches or villainous soliloquies meant to garner the

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

rapt attention of the house—or utterly trivial songs meant to waste the audience’s time while the set is being changed behind closed curtains.

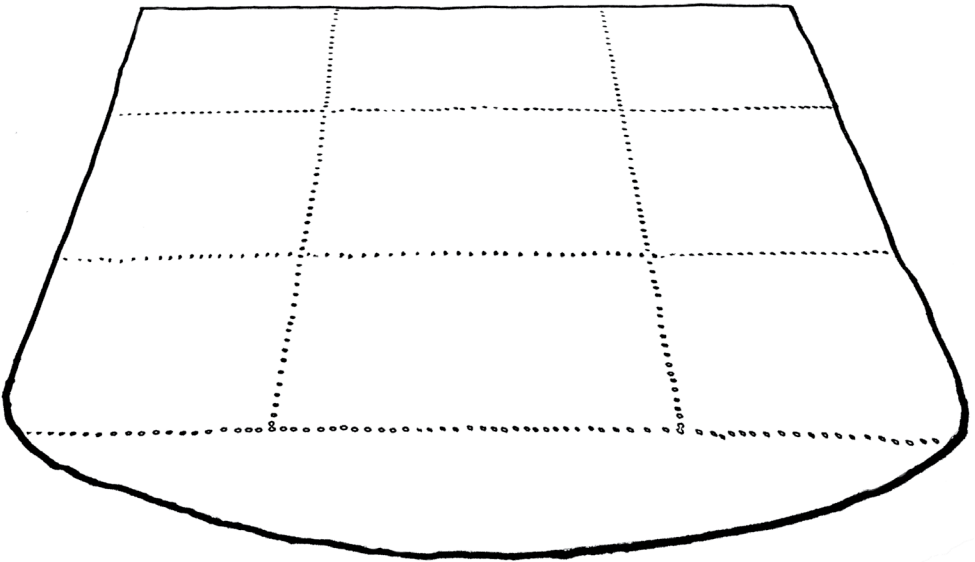
When you describe what your characters do, take advantage of the physicality of the stage! When you enter, say whether you enter from stage left or stage right. If you want to punctuate a line with movement, do so! A proper actor storms from one side of the stage to the other for any reason. If you’re being important, move downstage. Straight down to the apron if you feel that you must! If you’re letting someone else take focus, fade upstage. Don’t worry, the spotlights will follow you.

This isn’t quite “let’s break out the battlemat and minis for tactical positioning.” I’m simply asking that you, as you describe the actions your character takes, remember how a stage is set up and paint your picture accordingly.



## Let's Break Out the Battlemat and Minis for Tactical Positioning

What? Okay, I guess? I mean, this is meant to be theatre-of-the-mind imagination play. But if you really want to, you can make a map of it. Just take a large enough sheet of paper and draw something like this diagram on it: a three-by-three grid of squares, with a little curve along one edge to indicate the apron. This is your stage.



When you've decided upon the set you're using for Act I, as a group you should pencil in some of the appropriate furnishings. Generally speaking, the downstage row will be empty, because that's room for the actors to manoeuvre. The centre stage row will dominate the stage, which makes it appropriate for a sofa, or bed, or whatever else you might consider to be the most essential furniture in the room. Anything kept upstage will feel as if it is removed from the action, making it ideal for cabinets and telephones and things of that nature. Anything on the apron will draw attention to itself and feel dreadfully close to the audience, good for a writing table at which portentous pronouncements will be penned.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

Of course, these are mere guidelines; you can put furnishings wherever you want. Just try not to clutter the stage; be sure to leave at least three or four sections empty, so the actors have room to move. During the intermissions, erase the furnishings from the previous set and draw in the next set.

You'll need something to represent the actors. The minor characters already have little standees, which can represent them. You can easily make similar cards for the main characters (although you may wish to use a coloured index card, or put a small symbol on main characters' standees in order to signify that they are the characters who matter). Of course, if you have a crate full of minis, then by all means, rummage around until you find an elven paladin who bears some resemblance to a Victorian dandy or whatever you're playing, and make that your representative on the map.

Now, as you go through the play, use the mat to represent whether you are on the stage and, if so, where you are. Move yourself about freely, from one zone to another as the mood takes you. Avoid standing directly downstage of anyone else, blocking the audience from seeing them. This is known as "upstaging" and is poor form. Take your mini off the board entirely when you flee into the wings.

You may also hire a local tradesperson to stand near the map, keeping a flashlight trained on whoever holds the Spotlight token. This may, however, be a bit much. All of this may be a bit much.

*Director's Notes:  
Okay but can I LARP it?*

You want to do a Live-Action Role Play? As in **actually** walk around a real-world set. Perhaps while even wearing actual pieces of costume?

Listen. I physically cannot stop you. But at some point you are toeing the line between "playing a game" and "actually putting on a play" and I just don't know how to handle that.

## ONSTAGE , OFFSTAGE

During the course of the play, you will alternate between being onstage or offstage.

If you are **onstage**, then you are on the set, in view of the audience. You will either have your main character's name standee exposed, or have it covered by one of the minor characters' standees. In either case, you are in character as the character whose standee you display. This is where you do all of your acting, it's where the bulk of your time will be spent, and it's where the action happens.

If you are **offstage**, then you are in the wings, out of the audience's view. It's tremendously freeing, if you need to take a breath, and gives you the ability to take care of things which the audience should not see, such as changing costumes, while the action continues onstage. Oh, and you will be displaying your little "OFFSTAGE" standee.

Both onstage and offstage actions are essential to the success of the show, and both states have certain responsibilities and restrictions. Transitioning between the two is as simple as announcing that you are entering or exiting, and ensuring that you are displaying the appropriate label.

### Onstage

If you are onstage, the audience can see you. Therefore, you must be in character. Whether you are acting as your own main character, or as one of the minor characters, you must stay in that role.

You may, of course, describe the actions that your character is taking as they stride across the stage, wave their arms frantically, or otherwise perform a little physical business. That's fair and encouraged. But other than this, you must speak in the voice of the character you're portraying. Asking out-of-character questions, attempting to pause the proceedings, or acting as the wrong character entirely... that's called "breaking," and it will cost you Audience Favour (see page 46).

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

If you feel the need to interact with a physical object, then it **must** be one of the props the players collectively made. Indicate that you are using one of the props by picking up the index card and manipulating it. The golden rule is this: whosoever possesses the index card (as a player around the table) possesses the prop (as an actor within the game). Props are kept offstage, however, so if you want to interact with something, it must either be something you brought on yourself, or something another character brought to the stage.

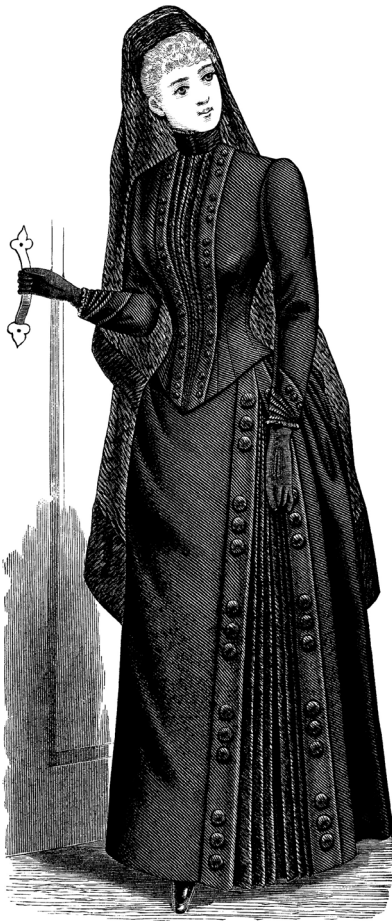
(Spontaneously growing a fifteen-foot-long arm which you fling out into the wings in order to grab a prop is a particularly spectacular example of breaking character.)

Should one of your fellow players break character and not realize it, someone should gently let that person know that they are spouting lunacy; addressing a tramp as if she were a duchess, talking to companions who have long since left the room, et cetera. The simple method is to clear your throat and point to the index card which indicates that you are not the character they think you are, or that you are in fact offstage. If they persist in breaking, someone may need to gently point out, in-character, that they are saying mad things at odds with reality or claiming to handle a prop when there is no conceivable way they could have picked it up.



## Offstage

If you are offstage, the audience cannot see you, and does not much care about you. You don't need to remain in character, and you don't need to describe the actions you're taking; we can trust that actors know how to scamper from place to place offstage without being seen, and don't need the specifics spelled out. Indeed, since the focus is on the on-stage action, most of your time spent offstage will be silent.



While offstage, you can grab any of the props which are offstage by picking up the appropriate index card. You can change your costume, transforming into one of the minor characters by placing the appropriate standee over your main character's, or turning back into your main character by tossing the standee back onto the pile. Then, watch the action unfold onstage and storm back on when the moment feels right.

You may create sound and lighting effects. If a sound effect is required, and you are offstage, you can make it: ring like a phone, howl like a wolf, or creak like a door, as appropriate. If you tried to do so while onstage, you'd look like a damn fool, but if you're calling in sound effects from the wings it will work. Likewise, if the lights need to dim, or change from white to blue, or otherwise do something more interesting than "shine on unimpeded," you can announce that you have done the task.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the ropes which operate the curtain are offstage. Someone must be offstage at the beginning of the act to raise the curtain, and someone must be offstage at the end of each act to lower it again. This is accomplished by shouting “Curtain!” at the appropriate moment (see “Ending an Act” on page 56 for more on when the curtain should be lowered).



### **Pace Pace Pace**

There may be such a thing as a slow-paced comedy. It’s not beyond the realm of the possible. But that’s not how Wilde works. From the moment the curtain rises until the moment it drops back down, the audience is watching and whomever is on the stage must be acting! That means you do not get to take the time to think about what you want to say, nor do you have the opportunity to huddle together and chat about where the act is headed. No, a farce is a bit like a freight train: once in motion, it must remain in motion.

No silence on stage. When asked a question, answer it immediately. When there’s a lull in the conversation, fill it! If you say the wrong thing or don’t understand what the other actors are doing, well, just run with it as best you can and pray that it all works out. This will be taxing! It’s okay. There will be intermissions. If you need to breathe, make an excuse and step offstage. Otherwise, as long as you’re onstage, you must keep the pace quick to keep the audience engaged.

## AUDIENCE FAVOUR

Any actor will tell you that the audience is as much a part of a play as anyone on stage. When the audience loves what's happening, the actors will perform better, and when the audience is bored, the actors will stagnate. It's emotional resonance and it's very much a part of the world of theatre.

In this simulacrum of stagecraft, you do not have access to an audience of hundreds or thousands locked in rapt attention, but you do have the next best thing: a handful of glass beads or similar small tokens. These are your Audience Favour tokens.

Audience Favour represents, obviously enough, how much the audience approves of you as an actor. Every player will start with three tokens: a small measure of goodwill from an audience that paid good money for these tickets and expects to be somewhat entertained. In all likelihood, you will gain and lose favour over the course of the play.



### Losing Favour

You lose favour whenever you break character while onstage. This can be as simple as addressing someone by the wrong name, failing to use an accent for an minor character who is supposed to have one, or getting confused and asking a question, out of character, about what's going on in the act. This also includes failing to maintain the pace when eyes are upon you—being silent for a few moments while other characters are bantering is fine, but if you are meant to be in the conversation but fail, you lose favour. If the action ever grinds to a halt

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

because the entire company is terribly, awkwardly silent for a number of seconds which seem to stretch out to infinity, then everybody loses favour. Even if you were offstage, you should have known enough to storm on, just to keep the action moving.

When you lose favour, simply toss one of your collected Audience Favour tokens back into the pile. It's a self-imposed punishment, so you are rather on your honour to give up your tokens when necessary (though if someone is patently refusing to lose favour, the other players may remind them at intermission that they should be paying out).

*Director's Notes: Breaking (in character)*

What if you aren't actually breaking character, but misnaming a person or being flustered **as** your character? That should be allowed, right?

And of course, it is. And so too, if you make an error, but immediately run with it in a seamless and in-character way. Losing favour is, ultimately, a personal judgment call. If you feel that the audience would remain on your side, then it is true. Congratulations.

But for heaven's sake, be honest with yourself.

## Gaining Favour

This play is a farce. It's a comedy. The audience is here expecting to laugh. The means by which you gain Favour should be obvious: making the crowd laugh. However, while you are in charge of recognizing when you screwed up, you cannot decide when the audience likes you. Instead, the players will determine for one another who gains Audience Favour.

When another player says something you find especially amusing, pass them a token from the pile. Be generous, don't wait for the funniest joke you've heard in your life. At the same time, be fair;

Audience Favour isn't the reward for any half-hearted pun; it's what you give someone who actually amuses you. This is, to some degree, relative. If things have been slow, then some cheap Vaudevillian chuckles will suffice. If the players have been on a roll, then wait for someone to raise the bar. It's certainly possible for multiple people to award someone favour at the same time although, in general, if you see that someone's already being rewarded, then ask yourself if they really deserve a double reward. Maybe they do.

### **Running out of Favour**

What happens when you use up all of the audience's limited goodwill? When you have given up the last of your Audience Favour? Well, that's a question with two possible answers.

The first, recommended, answer is... nothing. There's no such thing as negative goodwill, and though the audience might be unhappy with your performance, this is a quality theatre and they are altogether too polite to start throwing fruit at you. Even if everyone is sitting at zero Audience Favour; the audience might be dreadfully bored, but they paid for these seats so they are determined to fill them.

The second option is the scarier one... if someone runs out of favour, then the audience leaves. Or at least, enough of them leave that it's no longer worth continuing the show. This gives the game a failure condition. That might increase the tension in an interesting way. It might also increase the tension in a frustrating way, which encourages people to outright ignore Audience Favour rather than engaging with it. Which situation might be true for your group is highly dependent on your specific set of players.

If the risk of failure appeals to you, then by all means play on hard mode. But the recommended answer is still that there is no effect to running out of favour. Knowing that the audience is discreetly checking their watches should be punishment enough.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*



### *Director's Notes: Teaching the Game*

Once again, we have provided you with a script that summarizes the rules of the game; this script is provided with the expectation that you know the rules with reasonable facility, enough to answer questions and course-correct as necessary.

---

An act runs like this. The player with the spotlight token starts with their main character onstage [Make sure they have the appropriate standee]. Everyone else can be offstage, or onstage as a main or minor character.

[Figure that out. Make sure someone is offstage to work the curtain. If anyone tries to plan more than, say, two lines into the act, remind them that planning is going to fall apart, so they should concentrate on the very basics.]

Great. Now, when the act begins, we, you know, role play. Make the audience laugh. But our focus is on the spotlight character, and more specifically, their Lie. [Read the spotlight character's Lie.]

Our job is to force them to reveal that they are lying. Not directly, but by nudging the scene in that direction. When that happens, [to the spotlight character] when you are in a position where you need to reveal your Lie, you must instead tell a bigger lie. Bigger, dumber, harder to defend. When you do that, check off the Act I box on your standee, and pass the spotlight token to someone, anyone, who hasn't had their Lie confronted yet, then leave the stage and let them take focus.

The act doesn't pause! If you got the token, get your main character onstage, and then everyone else tries to expose your Lie, which you make bigger, and then pass the spotlight token to someone else who hasn't gone, and so on. Once everyone has gone, the last person tosses the spotlight in the centre of the table. The act ends when someone onstage drops a good act-ending one-liner, and someone offstage shouts "Curtain!" to lower the curtain and take us to the first intermission. We can talk about intermission when we get there. Any questions?

---

And with that, you may run through Act I. Another script will be waiting for you at the on page 58, dealing with the next steps.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*



## ON STAGE: PERFORMING THE PLAY

Okay, there's really no procrastinating anymore. Time for the curtain to go up. This is going to be a three-act play, and the structure of each act is going to be approximately the same: the characters will wander about the set, freely bantering with one another. The Spotlight will focus on the different main characters in turn, as each arrives in a situation where their Lie is confronted, and they must escalate it, plunging themselves into further embarrassment and, with any luck, amusing the audience. In the third act, the Lies will be revealed and the happy endings distributed. Easy enough, one hopes.

Let's break some legs.

## BEFORE EACH ACT

Before the act begins, decide on which set the act is going to take place. It's a group decision, but if someone needs to break a tie, then it's whoever has the Spotlight token. Prior to the first act, that means it's whomever has the character of the highest social station. Clear a little space on the table and put that set's card on clear display, to remind everyone where you all are.

The character with the Spotlight token will begin onstage (or begin the act as they come onstage), along with whomever else they want to have around—but remember, one actor needs to be offstage to raise the curtain. You can talk, briefly, about what sorts of things are likely to happen during this act, but you don't have the time to plan things

out in depth. Plans will fail. Broad tactics will also probably fail, but at least there's a hope that you can hold onto them.

Everyone who starts on stage will put on the appropriate costume and take any props they'll find necessary. Get your index cards in order. Everyone else waits offstage, ready to come on as the moment demands.

As soon as any offstage player calls out "Curtain!" to indicate that the curtain has risen, the play begins.

## DURING AN ACT

Once the curtain rises, everyone plays their roles. Talk in character, describe what you're doing and where on stage you are, and generally banter. Go offstage, come onstage, act ridiculous, make the audience laugh. In general, you are trying to figure out what the plot of this play is and make it happen. The guiding principle for this is the Spotlight.



*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

### *Director's Notes: House Lights!*

While this game is intended to stay light and comical, the nature of theatre and improvisation means that sometimes, stories may take a turn into territory you find uncomfortable.

Perhaps another actor is treating something you care deeply about with dismissive levity. Perhaps in the heat of the moment, someone is falling into racist, sexist, or otherwise troubling stereotypes. Perhaps a player has introduced a topic about which you have a particular and personal sensitivity. Ultimately, the specifics don't matter; our goal is to have a good time, and if a player is uncomfortable, that cannot happen, so something must be done.

If your group of players have a preferred safety-valve mechanism (such as the X-Card, or the Veil, or something of that nature) then by all means, use it. If not, however, here is a simple technique to bear in mind, which we are calling **House Lights**. If a situation in the play you are performing makes you feel uncomfortable, enough that it threatens to ruin this game for you, simply announce that you need to pause. Shouting out "Pause," is perfectly appropriate, or "Stop!" or anything of that nature, but for maximum theatricality, you can announce "House lights!"

Raising the house lights (that is to say, the overhead lights in the audience) is what a director does when it's time to Have Words with the actors, and is a signal that the play has been put on pause for an indefinite period. While the house lights are up, you are not performing, you do not need to be in character, and the audience is not paying any attention to you. This is time for you to talk as people, not as actors.

Tell the others what needs to be removed from the play. Importantly, this is psychology-free time. You do not need to justify or explain why you want something removed, you only need to explain what you need removed. The other players, as well, don't get to disagree with you on this; if you say "I don't want dogs in this play" then dogs will not be appearing in this play. That is firm.

When you have explained yourself sufficiently, choose a point a few moments back in the narrative, and call out "House lights down. And... action!" to return to the action. The play continues from that point, altered to avoid the events which prompted the house lights to go up in the first place.

## The Spotlight

Most of the stagehands have abandoned the production, not without good reason, but someone has stayed behind to train a spotlight on whichever character is most important at the moment, so that the audience knows where to keep their focus.

The most important character is whoever is holding onto the Spotlight token. They are called, appropriately enough, the **Spotlight Character**. The Spotlight token will pass from player to player over the course of the act, giving everyone an opportunity to be the Spotlight Character.

If you are given the Spotlight token, then your main character is the new focus, which means that they should be on the stage as soon as possible, if they aren't onstage already, and will be stuck there until the end of their Spotlight Scene.

## Spotlight Scenes

An act is composed of Spotlight Scenes, one per player. During a Spotlight Scene, the focus is on the Spotlight Character, and more specifically, their Lie. The actual point of the Spotlight Scene is to push the Spotlight Character into a position where they will have to reveal that their Lie is, well, a lie. This is known as the **confrontation**, and is covered in more detail below. Once the confrontation occurs, the Spotlight token will get passed to another player, until everyone's had their turn.

An act contains one Spotlight Scene for every main character, and a little bit of coda at the end. What an act does not contain is a break. In Victorian theatre, there was no changing of sets within an act, nor was there any indication of time passing. Instead, the act was traditionally treated as one particular window in space and time: characters might come and go, but the act was constant, as if the audience just happened to be standing in a room, unseen, while the action happened.

Describing the Spotlight Scenes as separate is a convenience; in fact, they flow directly into one another. The instant the Spotlight token changes hands, the next Spotlight Scene has begun. To the audience, there is no interruption, and for the actors, there is no break to catch a breath or a cigarette. You are still responsible for staying in character and maintaining pace during the transition.

## Confrontation and Escalation

When you are under the Spotlight, your Lie is going to be tested. Perhaps someone has access to evidence that the Lie is untrue, or asks someone to demonstrate an ability they are only claiming to have. Regardless, everyone on stage should be manipulating the action in such a way as to force the Spotlight Character to reveal that they have been lying. It is bad form to just ask the character outright, especially without cause. Rather, push the scene into a direction in which the nature of the Lie would logically become exposed.

(Although if things are dragging and the Spotlight Character doesn't seem to be getting the hints, go ahead and confront them outright by explicitly doubting their Lie. It's important to keep the play moving, after all. Just save that as a last resort.)

As the Spotlight Character, you are responsible for determining when your Lie has been confronted. In the name of entertaining the audience, you needn't crack under the slightest pressure; allow the other characters to gnaw on their suspicions for a few moments. But eventually, your Lie **will** be confronted, and a reasonable person would respond by admitting their deception.

But farces are not about reasonable people. Your character has the wisdom and social acumen of a dead newt, so when you are on the cusp of exposure, you react by escalation. Your Lie is in danger, so double down: do whatever you must to keep this Lie going.

In Act I, this usually means you **complicate** the Lie, converting it from a simple untruth to a small web of deception.

In Act II, you will **exaggerate** the Lie, taking it from a maintainably-sized falsehood to a whopper, already buckling under its own weight.

In Act III, you will **reveal** the Lie, attempting to escalate it again only to immediately bow under the pressure, and, alas, reveal to all that your Lie was a lie this whole time.



*Let us say your main character is utterly tone-deaf, but you have taken the Lie “I am able to sing!”*

*In Act I, in response to someone doubting your singing abilities, you complicate. “I have sung on stages across the continent to thunderous applause!” you say, deeply enmeshing you in the Lie.*

*In Act II, someone wishes to know more about your past performances, and you exaggerate. “I have won awards for my singing, and was knighted by the queen herself because of my skill!” you say. The sort of thing that even cursory research would disprove in moments.*

*In Act III, you are called into a position where you must sing a song to a small audience. A simple task for a knighted singer. Your response is to just... give it your best. You are found utterly wanting, forced at this point to confess that you cannot croak a note to save your life.*

*By the Author of Lady Windermere’s Fan*

## Passing the Spotlight

Once your Lie has been escalated, your time in the Spotlight is over. If there are players who have not had their Spotlight Scene yet this act, pass the Spotlight token to any one of them you wish, and then make an excuse to go offstage. You can come back as soon as you're ready, but leaving the stage gives the next Spotlight Character an opportunity to pull the audience's focus.

As soon as you're offstage, check the box for the appropriate act on the standee of your character sheet; this makes it easy for other players to track who has and has not had their Spotlight Scene.

If you are the last player to have a Spotlight Scene, instead toss the token into the centre of the table, in a way that makes it clear to everyone that you consider your scene to be over, and it is now time to wrap up the act.

## Ending an Act

Once every player has had their Spotlight Scene, and every Lie has been escalated, it's time to end the act. Act III has a few additional wrinkles—see “Revelations and Happy Endings” below—but even that will reach a point where everything that needs to occur has occurred, and all that's left is to wrap up the act. There's one final issue: every act must end with a *bon mot*.

A one-liner, an epigram, a cutting jibe: whatever you want to call it, the act cannot end until someone on stage has made a joke. Preferably a good one, although a cheap pun will work, so long as it's unambiguously meant to leave the audience laughing. Once this happens, any offstage player can shout “curtain!” to indicate that the curtain has been lowered, and the players can all take a breath, because the act is now over.

## *Director's Notes: Teaching the Game*

When you have finished Act I, here is a simple script to guide your players on to Act II.

---

It's intermission, which means we can get out of character if we need to. Update your main character's Lie on the standee to the bigger one, if you haven't already. If you thought of a better happy ending for your character, you can change that too, and you can change your character's costume if you think it's important.

We can each also make either a new prop or a new minor character, if there's something or someone the show is lacking.

[After everyone has made their changes] Okay. Act II is basically the same as Act I, only this time the Lie should get even bigger, impossible to defend. You can also start laying groundwork for your happy ending... but we don't really need to worry about that yet.

[Set up Act II, and when everyone is ready, raise the curtain.]

---

### **And another, to take them into Act III.**

---

Second and last intermission, works just like the first one.

We're going into the final act. This time, when you have your Lie confronted, you can try to hold onto it again... but then fail, exposing your Lie and embarrassing yourself. Crash and burn.

Once your Lie has been exposed and you've checked off the Act III box on your character sheet, you are now eligible for a happy ending! This can happen at any point after you've had your Lie exposed. It can come from nowhere, you don't have to deserve it, just make it happen. In addition to confronting Lies this act, we're also responsible for nudging players closer to their happy ending.

Once you get that happy ending, check off the box. Act III can't end until everyone has their happy ending!

---

With that complete, you have only one final bit of instruction, for the curtain call, on page 62.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

## INTERMISSION

Between Acts I and II, and then again between Acts II and III, there will be an intermission. This is, of course, an opportunity for the actors and audience alike to stretch their legs, void their bladders, and purchase overpriced concessions. How lovely.

There are also a few things you can accomplish during an intermission which will help the rest of the play progress smoothly.

First, update your character's Lie to reflect the changes wrought by the confrontation and escalation. Cross out what you wrote previously, and write in the new, grander version of their story. Be sure to do so on the front standee of your character sheet as well.

Secondly, if you wish, you may change your character's happy ending. It's entirely possible that the events of the act will convince you that the happy ending you picked isn't actually what is best for your character, in which case they shouldn't be hemmed in by it. The new happy ending does not need to be related to the old one in any way. Be sure to share it with the others, so that they'll know what happy ending to try and push you towards.

Third, if you feel the need, you may revise your character's costume to reflect a change in setting or circumstance.



Finally, you have a few spare minutes to rummage around in the back: each player may create *either* a new prop or a new minor character to appear in the following acts.

Eventually, when you've accomplished everything you need, you'll have to end the intermission. Alas. Whomever was the final Spotlight Character of the previous act gets to determine who will be the first Spotlight Character of the next. You can even choose yourself, if you really want to. After which, it's time to start preparing for the next act.

## REVELATIONS AND HAPPY ENDINGS

Over the course of Act III, the characters' Lies are going to be revealed, leaving them downtrodden, heartbroken, and embarrassed. While this is all well and good, if the play were to end with the characters in such a state, the audience would be quite baffled and forced to assume that a fourth act is incoming. No, you must make sure that the third act wraps up in a fulfilling way, and that means allowing every character to obtain their happy ending.

Once your character's Spotlight Scene has ended, they are eligible for their happy ending. Achieving that happy ending is incredibly simple: just do it. Honestly. While the reveal of the Lie demands two acts of run-up and a whole mess of justification, happy endings can fall out of the sky.

Propose to your loved one. Discover some mysterious correspondence. Say in no uncertain terms "Gosh, the only thing that would make me happy now is discovering that I was secretly a princess this whole time," and stare meaningfully at one of the other players until they enter with just such an announcement to make. A happy ending may happen during another player's Spotlight Scene, although it's common for several happy endings to tumble in only after all the Lies have been exposed.

Likewise, since you know what the other characters' happy endings are, do what you can to allow them to happen. Don't worry too much

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

about it—after all, you have your own character arc to focus on—but if you have the opportunity to make their dreams come true, go ahead and grant them their greatest desires, so long as it doesn't much inconvenience you.

When you have either gotten your happy ending or reached a point where your happy ending is assured to happen in the near enough future (for instance, if your happy ending involves marrying a character, and you wind up engaged with a marriage scheduled for the spring), check the “Happy Ending” box on your standee, to indicate that your character's arc has been completed successfully. Act III cannot end until every player has done so!

Once the happy endings have been distributed, the act can end as normal, although it is recommended that you save the curtain for a particularly worthy *bon mot*. After all, it will be the last line of the play, so send the audience out on a high note.



## CURTAIN CALL

You've done it. You've honestly done it; against all odds, you've managed to cobble together a Wilde in less time than it would take to put together a proper cucumber sandwich.

However, you must not congratulate yourself too much, because your task is not over just yet. There's a final bow to be performed.

Quickly count your Audience Favour tokens; you will be bowing in order from whomever has the least, to whomever has the most. In the event of a tie, the tied players are equally loved by the people, and will bow simultaneously.

When your turn comes, take a bow.

Actually do it. Right there at the table you're playing at, in front of the friends you're playing with. Bow with as much of a flourish as you can, because you just performed a play, for heaven's sake.

### *Director's Notes: Teaching the Game*

The instant the final curtain drops, the players will want to celebrate. But the game isn't over yet, so here is how you may guide them through the final motions.

---

Great work, but we're not quite done. Time for the curtain call. Everyone count up your Audience Favour tokens. Then, from least to most, everyone takes a bow.

[Force the players to take their bow. Applaud lightly for them.]

And now everyone together.

[Bow as a group.]

Last thing. The player with the most Audience Favour, you have an important job. You need to announce the title of the play we just ran.

---

Get them to announce it in as dramatically a fashion as you can. Applaud them like mad. Lead everyone in a final bow. Et cetera.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

And when everyone has taken their bows in order, all of you take a bow together. Allow the thunderous applause to wash over you. You might clap a bit for one another, that's perfectly fine. Just take a moment to be very proud of yourselves. Imagine your director slipping onto the stage and saying something to the tune of "I knew you would pull through, I had every confidence in you all."

Know in your hearts that it is a lie, and one does not become a director by believing in actors, but accept the praise regardless.

Don't leave yet, however, as there is one task to be performed still, and it must be performed by the audience's favourite actor: whomever has the most Audience Favour tokens. In the event of a tie, then the players who are not tied must collectively choose one of the tied players to be the audience's favourite. In the unlikely event of a tie between all players, then the player who had the very first Spotlight Scene in the first act is the audience's favourite (such are the advantages of high social status).

If you are the audience's favourite, you must title this play. Use your best judgment. There are very few wrong answers, but see if you can come up with something that is punchy and memorable, which represents the thrust of the plot in a few words, contains a pun which is only evident to those who have seen the full show, and which looks good on a marquee. Do your best.

Then, in a loud, clear voice, announce to the back rows:

"Thank you for attending this performance of," and then the title you've selected, "performed by the Westland Theatre Company, and written by the author of *Lady Windermere's Fan*."

Sneak in one final bow, then head backstage with the other actors, and see if you can't get your hands on a bottle of champagne.



*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*



## PLAYBILLS

So perhaps, instead of doing the tedious business of setting up a play, you'd rather spend the few panicked moments before the audience arrives calming your nerves with a gentle application of wine. All well and good. Fortunately, one of the stagehands has managed to dredge up a box of old playbills from shows the theatre has performed in the past, ready to be re-used.

### USING THESE PLAYBILLS

Playbills are ready-made story seeds, providing all the information which you would normally create during game setup, including a very rough idea of what the plot of the show might look like. If you don't have the time or inclination to go through the full setup process, playbills can get you ready to put on a show in only a few minutes.

Of course, playbills are not set in stone! If, for instance, a player wants to tweak one of the supplied characters to their own dramatic ends, they are of course welcome to. The purpose of playbills is to speed along the process of creating a play, not to limit the creativity of the players. Consider them, primarily, sources of inspiration, and alter whatever you need to fit your tastes.

### SETUP ( WITH PLAYBILLS )

When using playbills, you won't need to go through the backstage portion of the game. Instead, select as a group which play sounds most interesting.

Playbills first describe three sets used in this production. You may change the order in which they appear as necessary.

Next is a list of the *dramatis personae*—the five main characters of the play, complete with a vice, tragic history, Lie, and happy ending. All the players select one of the five to be their main character and copy the appropriate information onto their character sheet, tweaking the details as your needs and whims take you.

Characters do not have relationships yet, so those must be established. Five simple relationships fitting the genre are suggested, and players may either select one of those to forge a relationship between their character and the one to their left, or create one from scratch if they feel the inspiration to do so. If you do select a sample



*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

relationship, it is advantageous to elaborate just a bit on the very simplistic example.

Finally there is a list of minor characters and props which may appear in the production. Each player shall select a minor character and copy their details onto a standee—if necessary, explicate how this character has a relationship with your main character. Then choose a prop from the list and copy it onto an index card. Then toss all that in a slapdash fashion into a pile.

Now, all you need to do is decide who has the highest social status among the characters you've selected. They're listed in order of assumed social status, but if you want to have a loud argument about it instead, well, who am I to stop you? Then, go run a play; there is a suggestion for an opening tableau, to give you a leg up as you start Act I. It's just the very smallest story seed, and the player who has the Spotlight may choose to use or ignore it as they wish. After that, however, they are very much on their own.

When you're all finished, and the audience's favourite actor has the opportunity to title the play they've just performed, they may of course grab the title from the playbill. But for heaven's sake, they are encouraged to do that as a last resort.



## THE THEATRICAL ENGAGEMENT

In London, all the important people are clamouring for tickets to opening night at the National Theatre. The play isn't the thing—it's Hamlet, or something indistinguishable from it, and nobody really cares. What's important is getting one of the box seats so that you can see and be seen by the city's upper crust.

Of particular note is box twelve, the greatest of them all, so luxuriously located that one can't even see the stage from there. The tickets were sold ages ago, but it hardly matters who actually bought them, just who has them by opening night.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

## Sets:

- **Act I:** The box office in front of the National Theatre. An extremely fancy booth where one might buy tickets, next to the large, ornate doors to the lobby. Everything is lush: purple velvet draperies, gilt on all the wooden surfaces, ornate frescoes of cherubs and masks and things on the wall. It's very, very nearly too much.
- **Act II:** An upscale London flat, albeit one in relatively poor repair. The wallpaper, once vibrant blue, has faded. The sofa and chairs are slightly different shades of off-white. The coffee table is worn, the window dressings are frayed about the edges. Though far from squalid, it has clearly seen better days.
- **Act III:** Box twelve. Flats cover the edges of the stage, leaving an area only a few feet wide for the actors. It can seat two comfortably; more than that and people will press against one another. Like the front of the theatre, it's ornate, but here the colours are red velvet and deep mahogany.

## Dramatis Personae

Countess Alison Blackstone - Perhaps the largest name in London's theatre-attending scene, the Countess Blackstone has been attending plays at the National Theatre for half a century. She fully intends to continue doing so, and hopes only that when she does shuffle off this mortal coil she will do so in box twelve, with enough dignity to wait until after the curtain is drawn. She wears an old fashioned, large-bustled dress of a deep burgundy colour, with matching boa.

- **Vice:** Young, attractive men. You know... arm candy.
- **Tragic History:** A sad one, this: in her much younger days, the Countess lost the Count and much of her family in a boating accident.
- **Lie:** The Countess really, truly is here to see and be seen. Her Lie is "I actually enjoy attending plays!"
- **Happy Ending:** The Countess would like a legacy... something which will memorialize her after she's gone. Maybe they could rename it the Blackstone Theatre?

Lord Stanley Harris - A wealthy socialite. Stanley is a bachelor well into his fifties and likely to remain single for the foreseeable future; all the energy a man would normally devote to family he has instead put into advancing his social station. He dresses in the finest fashion: a top hat and tails, spotless kid gloves, and an ostentatious watch chain.

- **Vice:** Lord Harris actually loves the theatre, for its own sake, not just as a means to see and be seen.
- **Tragic History:** Lord Harris wants nobody to know about his common past, as the son of a butcher.
- **Lie:** That “lord” title? That’s just an affectation nobody has questioned yet. Thus, his Lie is “I am indeed a member of the nobility!”
- **Happy Ending:** An actual invitation into the peerage. To be a baron would be quite sufficient.

Hyacinth Fowler - The manager at the National Theatre. Hyacinth is not even twenty, and inherited the theatre when her father passed away unexpectedly earlier in the year. Though most expected her to sell it, she is determined to prove her worth by running things on her own. Hyacinth is still wearing mourning clothes for her father: a voluminous black dress and a simple but stylish mourning cap.

- **Vice:** Hyacinth cannot turn down fine cuisine. She is no common glutton, but if there are truffles being prepared in her neighbourhood she will sniff them out faster than any hound.
- **Tragic History:** While the death of her father was sad, the true tragedy is that Hyacinth’s new responsibilities at the theatre forced her to call off her engagement with her beloved.
- **Lie:** Hyacinth, perhaps a bit too strong-willed and unwilling to accept defeat, is covering up a minor disaster at the theatre. Her Lie is “My lead actor is definitely still alive!”
- **Happy Ending:** Her needs are simple. Hyacinth wants the theatre to thrive. And for that to happen, opening night needs to be a resounding success.

Elizabeth Pennington - An heiress-in-waiting. A wealthy uncle's ill-conceived will stated that the bulk of his fortune would go to the first Pennington girl to get married, which is putting her in rather fierce competition with her sisters. She's not all that interested in the money, but she has a sincere desire to keep her sisters from getting it. She dresses in the most fashionable style: flared dress, puffy sleeves, and wide hat, all in dusty rose with crimson accents.

- **Vice:** Elizabeth's competitive streak is incredibly strong, and she is very much a sore loser.
- **Tragic History:** Some years back, while her father's business struggled and her mother's health was failing, Elizabeth took up petty thievery to keep the family afloat. Tragic!
- **Lie:** ...but not so tragic that she gave up theiving once the family was on better footing. In fact, she excels at it. Elizabeth's Lie is that "I am not the infamous cat burglar known only as "The Tiger!"
- **Happy Ending:** Her uncle's fortune of course. Which means a wedding, as soon as is possible.

Arthur Chambers - Actor. Director. Producer. Playwright. Creative whirlwind. Arthur lives for the stage, but he is, alas, not quite National Theatre calibre. Rather, he runs a hole-in-the-wall playhouse called "The Nation" about a block away. When offstage, he is always wearing a huge musketeer-style hat with a lavender plume. He thinks it quite dashing. The rest of his outfit is generally much shabbier.

- **Vice:** Shakespeare. Chambers is altogether obsessed with the Bard, who he considers a personal hero. Quotes plays (with, oh, moderate accuracy) at any opportunity.
- **Tragic History:** Chambers has been cut off from his wealthy family, for choosing to pursue theatre.
- **Lie:** Arthur's theatre is his world, but it's on the verge of collapse. Thus, his Lie is "The Nation is a financially viable theatre!"
- **Happy Ending:** A patron! Someone to finance The Nation and keep it running indefinitely.

## Relationships :

- I am madly, but secretly, in love with you.
- I have lent you a great deal of money, which has not been returned.
- I have been seeking your assistance on a business venture.
- When I was younger we were dearest friends; we've since grown apart.
- I consider you to be my social rival.

## Minor Characters :

- The usher at the National Theatre. Snide, snooty, knows all the business going on at the theatre. Has an enormous handlebar moustache.
- Jeremy Flynn, one of the actors at the National Theatre. Handsome but a bit dim (just like Countess Blackstone likes 'em). Dresses like a dandy in a morning coat and incredibly ruffled green ascot.
- Lady Amethyst Harris, a socialite of the particularly cruel sort, who spreads rumours not merely to elevate her own station, but just for fun. Wears a wide straw hat bedecked in flowers.
- West End Sally, local vagabond. She knows who's who in the theatre district's underworld, and can arrange meetings for a price. She wears an outrageously oversized patched up greatcoat.
- Detective Warwick Jones, of the London police. Incredibly deadpan, thoughtful, slow to react. Wears a tan trench coat and spotless black bowler.
- Lord Gilbert Goldman, who has recently moved to London from the North. He feels it's his destiny to be a playwright, despite a complete lack of experience or talent. Wears a very grand cape.
- A person in a bear costume. Presumably they have something to do with a play... this is the theatre district. Mostly just growls at passers-by. Might actually be a bear?

## Props:

- The tickets to opening night's show, box twelve.
- A playbill for the National Theatre's current show.
- A very expensive-looking jade pendant.
- A small revolver. It's loaded with blanks, so fire away if you feel the impulse.
- A thick stack of 100 pound notes.
- A realistic-looking sword made of foam rubber.
- An ornate pair of pearl-handled opera glasses.

## Opening Tableau:

You arrive at the National Theatre, intending to purchase a ticket to box twelve. You discover another socialite, in serious argument with a member of Theatre staff; it seems the tickets have already been purchased, and they are refusing to reveal just who has claimed the coveted seats.



## THE FLORENTINE

Florence, Italy, in the 16th century, is among the richest cities in the world. The people are beautiful, the fashions are gorgeous, and the food—oh heavens, the food is the finest you will ever come across, especially if you happen to find yourself at the Bardi Family Bakery just off the Piazza Santa Croce.

It is, however, politically unstable. Powerful families vie for control of the city, employing methods which could be described as “Machiavellian” at best, and “vindictive and petty” most of the time. When the Duke of Florence is assassinated as he stops for a bite, a humble bakery finds itself dragged into the world of brutal political machinations.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

## Sets:

- **Act I:** The interior of a bakery and cafe; there is a seating area cluttered with tables and chairs that almost, but don't quite, match. Upstage of it all there is a counter, behind which is a flat painted to resemble a kitchen full of baking accoutrements. Also, there's going to be a dead duke at one of the tables.
- **Act II:** In front of the Basilica of Santa Croce. The image of a massive church takes up the back of the stage, and the colours of the sky indicate that it is twilight. The stage itself is dominated by an enormous marble statue of Dante at centre stage.
- **Act III:** A throne room. The throne is upstage centre on a small platform, and a red carpet runs away from the throne down to the edge of the stage, growing wider as it does, offering the illusion that the room is deeper than it really is. The throne is undecorated gold, and the rest of the set is plain, in an "I'm so powerful I don't need to show off" sort of way.

## Dramatis Personae

Vincente de Luca - A young member of the de Luca family; the de Lucas are not yet one of the powerful lords in Florence, but they are poised to sweep in should one of the major houses show weakness. Vincente himself is too young to be privy to family politics, to his annoyance. He dresses as he imagines a fighter does: big hat, flowing cape, and rapier at his hip.

- **Vice:** Vincente loves a fight. He'll declare a duel at the drop of a hat, or join a tavern brawl already in progress, just for kicks.
- **Tragic History:** Love! Nothing more tragic than that. Vincente was once close to a daughter of the Salviati family, but they have been forbidden to see one another.
- **Lie:** A lie common to younger members of semi-powerful families... "I am the effective head of the de Luca family!"
- **Happy Ending:** As a loyal son of the family, Vincente's happy ending is that the de Lucas become the most powerful family in Florence.

Francesca Salviati - The matron of the Salviati family. The Salviatis are considered to be one of the ruling families of Florence but, alas, a series of bad decisions and mounting debts have caught up to them, and they are poised to lose their power. Francesca, eldest member of the family, is in charge of keeping them in power, somehow. She wears a plain dress, severe hair, and a jewelled necklace which looks like it costs as much as a house.

- **Vice:** Baked goods. She doesn't come to the Bardi family bakery for her health.
- **Tragic History:** Francesca was the only survivor of the great Salviati Family Poisoning a decade ago. Every other head of the family was killed by some bad fish.
- **Lie:** It turns out that Francesca d'Alvinio, servant to the Salviati family, benefited from confusion in the wake of that poisoning. Her Lie is "I am actually a member of the Salviati family!"
- **Happy Ending:** Though she has enjoyed the prestige of pretending to be a Salviati, Francesca would really like to return to her humbler roots and reunite with the d'Alvinios.

Alfredo Bardi - Owner and operator of the Bardi Family Bakery, just off the Piazza Santa Croce. Alfredo is a master of the baking arts, as was his father before him. His breads are the finest in Florence, and everyone agrees. His outfit is stereotypical chef: a pressed white apron, a tall white hat, and a thick black moustache.

- **Vice:** Vanity. Not for himself, particularly, but for his bakery; it has to look perfect.
- **Tragic History:** Some years ago, Alfredo spilled a coffee on the Duke of Florence's lap, and the Duke has been causing merry hell for the bakery ever since.
- **Lie:** In a rare example of a Lie that started only moments before the play opened: "I don't know how the Duke died!"
- **Happy Ending:** Alfredo is a simple man with simple needs. He'd like to move to a slightly larger location, and not be executed for having a dead Duke in his bakery.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

Victoria Bardi - The face of the Bardi Family Bakery. Victoria is not much of a baker, though she can assemble a serviceable scone if times are desperate enough. Instead, her job is to pour the coffee, pass out the goods, collect the payments, and generally make sure that the customers are having as pleasant a time as possible. She wears a pressed white apron over a colourful frock.

- **Vice:** Victoria is an incorrigible gossip, and needs to know all the goings-on of Florence.
- **Tragic History:** In her youth, Victoria had strong but ill-conceived political opinions which she expressed through light arson. She's spent a few years in prison because of that.
- **Lie:** Victoria, who has never left Florence, explains away her time in prison as time spent traveling the world. Her Lie is "I have visited all the great cities of Europe!"
- **Happy Ending:** Gosh, it would be nice to be a Duchess. I mean, with the Duke dead, there's an opening, right?

Bonina Bardi - The dark secret of the Bardi Family Bakery. Bonina has been trained in the arts of baking, and largely rejected them as too tame. Oh, she'll throw together a normal loaf when necessary, but on her own time she experiments in the kitchen, eschewing tradition as she tries to craft the finest baked goods humanity has ever known. She is young, and wears a sinister black apron and gloves.

- **Vice:** Baking, of course. At any given moment, Bonina has a half dozen gustatory experiments in progress.
- **Tragic History:** Bonina was engaged to be wed, but no more than a week ago, her partner ended the engagement, unable to stand Bonina's obsession with breadstuffs.
- **Lie:** Though the baking experiments always come first, the called-off engagement hurt more than Bonina lets on. Her Lie is "I don't care that my engagement was cut off!"
- **Happy Ending:** There is a secret ingredient out there which will make the Perfect Baked Good. Bonina must know what it is.

## Relationships :

- You have evidence that puts me in a compromising position.
- I consider you to be something of a mentor, though I try not to reveal this.
- We once competed bitterly for the romantic attentions of the same person.
- Despite our many differences, are close friends and take lunch together most days.
- We have both been named in a spurious lawsuit by a member of the Urbino family.

## Minor Characters :

- Catalina Salviati, the naive young daughter of the Salviati family. Curious, friendly, entirely oblivious to romance and danger alike. She wears a bright dress with unreasonably poofy sleeves.
- Alessandro de Luca, conniving head of the de Luca family. Clever, snide, expects his family to obey his orders without question. Has a dark suit, ruffled collar, and shock of white hair.
- Constable Bernadetto, who upholds the law for whichever family is currently in power. Greedy and easily distracted. He wears cheap, mismatched bits of armour.
- Lorenza di Giambuona, the greatest assassin in Italy. She's a celebrity, and acts accordingly. She wears a black tunic with a very showy bandoleer of throwing knives.
- Pope Clement VII, the pope. The guy who appointed the Duke of Florence, and de-facto ruler of Italy. Friendly, indecisive, easy to push around. Dresses, unsurprisingly, like a pope.
- Fantina, the delivery girl. She hauls bags of flour for small change and day-old bread, and is almost always underfoot, watching the goings-on at the bakery. Always covered in flour.
- A cousin, Paulo or something like that, who happens to look almost exactly like the Duke. He's drunk and confused, and will most likely be introduced while dressed in hastily tailored ducal finery.

## Props:

- A fairly convincing human corpse, dressed in a duke's finery. This prop is pretty much mandatory.
- A great big loaf of bread.
- A dainty coffee cup.
- A sheathed sword (fake, so don't be afraid to whack people with it).
- A thin newspaper, whose headline reads "NEWS."
- A small A-frame chalkboard sign with "TODAY'S SPECIAL" written on top, and a piece of chalk.
- A large wallet, filled to overflowing with bank notes.

## Opening Tableau:

Start with the corpse prop, draped dramatically over the table, alone on the stage. You wander in and scream, attracting the attention of everyone else in or near the bakery.

## Special Note:

You may have noticed that this playbill does not actually spell out how or why the Duke ended up dead. That would be a spoiler, of course, the sort of thing best saved for a third act reveal.

It's almost certain that one of the Main Characters did him in, and you may wish to take a moment during the intermission between Acts II and III to clear up who did it and why, if it isn't obvious already, so that the grand reveal can be appropriately dramatic.



## FAERIE SCHOLARS

A faerie-road has opened up outside Covent Garden, connecting our world with the magical fae realm on the other side. Of course there's a bounty of tourism in both directions. But alas, high society has determined that faeries are tedious and decidedly unfashionable.

At the University of London, the dedicated researchers at the recently-created Department of Magical Studies have discovered that their budgets are being slashed and their work is going unrecognized by human and faerie alike. Now they have to justify the very existence of their department or get ousted from academia.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

## Sets:

- **Act I:** The office of an academic. Though reasonably large, it is uncomfortably cluttered; overflowing bookshelves line the walls, and everyone entering from the wings will need to sidle sideways between filing cabinets. A desk dominates upstage centre, covered in books, papers, and small items of potential scientific interest.
- **Act II:** A road, running roughly between downstage left and upstage right. Bushes and trees exist on either side of the road implying a natural setting, and the painting at the rear of the stage depicts a blue-skied day and a castle far in the distance. The castle is a hodgepodge of towers and crenulations, fancy and impractical.
- **Act III:** A lovely sitting room which happens to be upside-down. A chandelier thrusts upward from the centre of the floor, while a sofa and chairs hang uselessly from above. There are windows on the back wall which depict an unassuming landscape, also upside-down, stretching off into the distance.

## Dramatis Personae

Sparrow - A lesser faerie noble, Sparrow is also known as the Queen of Wings, and rules over the area of the fae realm named The Sorrows, adjacent to Convent Garden. She appears to be in middle age, and is a touch more serious and sober than most faeries. She wears a long brown robe, with a feather motif stitched onto it in gold thread.

- **Vice:** Sparrow is intensely interested in human creations, especially machinery.
- **Tragic History:** Some centuries ago, Sparrow invited Titania, Queen of the Faeries, over to tea, and served her from the second-finest set of bone china. This has haunted Sparrow ever since.
- **Lie:** The Sorrows is, alas, not a prestigious corner of the fae realm, not even with its faerie road to mortal shores. Sparrow's Lie is that "My domain is extremely respected among the fae!"
- **Happy Ending:** Life in The Sorrows has become tiring, and Sparrow would like to abdicate her position. However, she will need to find someone to bear the role she gives up.

Professor Elisa Adams - Acting chair of the University of London's Department of Magical Studies. Professor Adams attained the position following the unexpected death of the former chair, and though she is qualified, she is by far the youngest department head at the university, and is extremely self-conscious about it. She always wears her collegiate robes and puffy professor's hat.

- **Vice:** Professor Adams likes to teach. Not uncommon among professors, but her level of interest in students is considered uncouth among academics more interested in writing essays and sabotaging one another's research.
- **Tragic History:** Professor Adams was a changeling: a human stolen as a baby and raised by faeries. A most irregular childhood.
- **Lie:** A simple effort to cover her history: "Of course I have a real human family!"
- **Happy Ending:** Professor Elisa wants nothing more than the assurance that the Department of Magical Studies will continue exist, with someone else at the head.

Professor Henry Goldman - A college professor, Goldman divides his time between magical theory, archaeology, and advanced mathematics. Though seemingly unrelated, Professor Goldman is prepared to provide an eye-wateringly dull explanation of why the subjects are closely aligned. He is older, bearded, and wears the classic tweed suit.

- **Vice:** His age and milquetoast demeanour belie the fact that Professor Goldman is a fiend for travel. Exploration, adventure, discovering ancient ruins, things of that nature.
- **Tragic History:** One of Professor Goldman's expeditions went awry recently, and he was forced to battle a troll which had escaped from the fae realm. He barely survived the altercation.
- **Lie:** Goldman is unwilling to reveal the extent of his troll-wounds; his Lie is "I am absolutely healthy enough for adventure!"
- **Happy Ending:** Recognition for his years of service to the university. Professor Goldman wants to be the chair of a department.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

Antimony Newman - A student at the University of London, currently in her first year studying magic. Having been obsessed with faeries from a young age, Antimony is very much living her dream... or would be, if there were a bit less "rigorous study" and a lot more "casting some darn magic already." She wears school regulation clothes: plum skirt, grey tights and blazer.

- **Vice:** Studiousness. Of a particularly grating "I must be the head of class" sort.
- **Tragic History:** Antimony's family are virulently opposed to both faeries and higher education, and her studies have strained many relationships.
- **Lie:** Humans can perform magic, but only after years of dedicated effort. Antimony's Lie, "Of course I can perform magic!" is mostly wishful thinking.
- **Happy Ending:** Given half a chance, Antimony would emigrate via faerie road, and live the rest of her life in the fae realm.

Thomas Flint - A student at the University of London, albeit not for much longer unless something changes drastically. He is barely passing his classes, and much detested by faculty for his lousy work ethic. His outfit is regulation grey blazer and slacks, with a plum tie. But not ironed, and the tie is sloppily tied indeed.

- **Vice:** Sloth, unsurprisingly. He's a bright lad, but has no interest in doing the work.
- **Tragic History:** Thomas comes from a line of academics, who he brings great shame to. Indeed, his uncle is dean of this very university, though neither man would admit it.
- **Lie:** The obvious one, familiar to many students... "I am doing well academically!"
- **Happy Ending:** Thomas hates academia, and wants to live a life he finds more meaningful... a merchant or artisan or something. His sole desire is to get out of school without being entirely disowned by his family.

## Relationships :

- Due to a quirk in Faerie Law, I have been appointed as your servant.
- We have been bound together by a faerie marriage contract.
- You have been aiding me in my studies for some time.
- We once battled a beast that emerged from the faerie road.
- We are working together on a book about faerie magical theory.

## Minor Characters :

- Titania, the undisputed Queen of all Faerie and most powerful magical force in the known world. A bit aloof, but understanding. Dressed in a diaphanous silvery gown.
- Charles Artemis, dean of the University of London. As crotchety as you might imagine, if not more so. Practically hidden beneath a voluminous black greatcloak.
- Pearblossom, a faerie servant. Like most fae folk, she is less concerned with her duties and more with opportunities to make mischief. Wears a three-piece suit made out of autumn leaves.
- Alice Klassen, professor of magical theory. She's the evil kind of professor, all too ready to backstab or perform illicit experiments on grad students. Wears a red dress and big glasses.
- Clint Dewdney, gentleman explorer. Discoverer of the Covent Gardens faerie road, and plenty of other exciting things. Beloved by the masses. Wears a pith helmet, of course.
- Lady Chastity Kendrick, wealthy magician. Despite having earned her fame from fae magic, she is a leading voice in cutting off contact between human and faerie. Wears a black robe with embroidered star-and-moon motif.
- A troll. Well, a Sasquatch costume from an unspeakably poorly-received adaptation of *Harry and the Hendersons* with horns hot-glued to the forehead. But it works as a fierce troll costume.

## Props:

- A freestanding chalkboard, with chalk.
- A truly massive tome, hard to even carry.
- A magic staff made of twisted wood. There's some fishing wire attached to it, so someone offstage can pull the other end and make it appear to float!
- A clockwork orrery made of shiny brass.
- A jewelled diadem, all covered in ruby and emerald.
- A truly massive pile of flowers. Hundreds of them, in all colours.
- A sheaf of loose papers, with writing on them, which could represent a thesis in-progress.

## Opening Tableau:

A member of the university faculty is in their office, quietly doing work essential to academia. You give them a half-moment and then storm in, all atwitter, asking why the university is shutting down the Department of Magical Studies.



## A BITE AT THE CASTLE

The Von Derrick family castle, high on the hill overlooking the village, is the subject of many, many rumours. They say that the prince comes in secret to the castle in the dead of night on errands that the royal family doesn't know about. They say that when a young person disappears somewhere in the county, it's because they've been abducted, and are forever behind the castle walls. They say that the Von Derricks are vampires.

...they are. They are vampires, but they don't necessarily appreciate the gossip, even when it happens to be true.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

## Sets:

- **Act I:** A clearing in a garden maze. Bushes seven feet high, dotted with small white flowers, line the stage. On the back wall, there is the image of a large domicile, more mansion than castle but still dark and ominous, in the near distance. There is an ornate fountain downstage centre. Blue gels over the spotlights may give the illusion that it is dusk.
- **Act II:** A sitting room. The window on the back wall has been covered by a very thick curtain. The room itself contains a trio of loveseats, all in red leather, gathered around a small coffee table. Bookshelves against the wall. No visible light sources. The mood is fairly innocuous, even if the room is bizarrely dim.
- **Act III:** A dungeon. All done up in concrete, painted white (albeit with more than a few hard-to-clean stains). On the walls are shackles, and in the centre of the floor is a drain. And of course there's blood, basically coating the entirety of stage right.

## Dramatis Personae

Lord Harlow Von Derrick - A vampire. Centuries old, but still interested in the mortal world, Lord Harlow travels frequently, follows the local sports and politics, and even keeps up-to-date on the dealings of his great, great grandnephews and nieces. He dresses in a dapper style only a season or two out of date, with top hat and waistcoat.

- **Vice:** Charity. Lord Harlow feels a desperate need to give money and support to the subset of those less fortunate who he does not intend to eat.
- **Tragic History:** Some vampires have a peaceful transition, but Harlow was a most reluctant vampire, and was left to fend for himself, half feral, for years.
- **Lie:** Born in an earlier age, Lord Harlow never learned skills which modern folk find essential. His Lie is "I am not illiterate!"
- **Happy Ending:** Lord Harlow wants to do something good for the world. It's a bit vague, sure, but he'll likely figure out what it means by the time he accomplishes it.

Lady Agatha Von Derrick - Also a vampire. Very young in vampire terms; she's only been blood-sucking for a decade or so, although she is very, very happy with her new un-life. She lives lavishly and looks down upon the puny mortals that fill the world. She dresses in a black dress accented with several strings of pearls.

- **Vice:** Blood. A vice of every vampire, to an extent, but Lady Agatha takes it a bit beyond what even a blood-sucker would consider appropriate.
- **Tragic History:** Lady Agatha was staked to death by a vampire hunter a year ago. For what it's worth, she got better, but the experience is still haunting.
- **Lie:** The Von Derrick family is land-rich, but they are lacking in liquid funds, so for all practical purposes they are dirt poor. Agatha's Lie is that "We have lots of money in our coffers!"
- **Happy Ending:** All the money. All of it. Or at least much much more of it than she currently has.

Alfric Chesterforth - A wealthy Londoner. Very new money, made it all in land developments or something equally dull that he doesn't particularly want to bore people with the details of. Middle-aged but dreadfully ill, he is officially on a recuperative holiday, but is, in fact, hoping to discover that there are vampires, be turned, and in so doing be cured of his illness. Dresses in brightly coloured suits which would look more appropriate on a much younger man.

- **Vice:** High fashion! Alfric has got to look good at all times, in all places.
- **Tragic History:** The aforementioned illness, which is causing him to slowly waste away.
- **Lie:** Though reasonably upfront about the fact that he is ill, Alfric shies away from admitting to the severity of it. Thus, "I'm not dying!"
- **Happy Ending:** Vampirehood is his nominal goal, but really any form of immortality will make Alfric happy for the rest of his days. Which is to say, for the rest of all days.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

Edwin Ashe - A monster-hunter. Professional. Licensed, even, although the government who licensed him will officially disavow all knowledge of monsters. He's slain a handful of Von Derricks in the past, and nearly been killed by the vampire family many times. But there's not much bad blood there... it's a job. He wears a brown trenchcoat, audaciously long hair, and a necklace of fangs.

- **Vice:** Weaponry. Swords, spears, firearms, whips, whatever. Edwin needs to have it and master it.
- **Tragic History:** Edwin comes from a long line of monster hunters and, frankly, he is mediocre by comparison. He is most especially trapped in his father's shadow.
- **Lie:** A Lie Edwin has been telling consistently for the last few years, following a mission gone awry: "I am not a werewolf!"
- **Happy Ending:** Edwin, alas, has fallen in love with a charming vampire, and his dearest wish is that they two can be wed.

Mary Piper - A young girl from the nearby village. She has snuck into the castle and is currently pretending to be a servant, all the while she is actually gathering information, with the intent of going public with proof that vampires are real. She wears a fairly standard maid outfit: black dress and white apron.

- **Vice:** Honesty. More specifically, making sure that other people are honest, whether they want to be or not. Mary truly believes that every secret should be revealed. In another time and place she'd be a hotshot journalist.
- **Tragic History:** Mary's family was slain when she was but a toddler, and she blames vampires for it.
- **Lie:** As much as it pains her to lie, Mary is currently telling anyone who will listen "I am legitimately employed at the Von Derrick castle!"
- **Happy Ending:** Reveal the truth about vampires! To everyone! Or at least get a story about it into the Times.

## Relationships :

- I am in on all of your secrets.
- I am deeply, tragically in love with you.
- Not long ago, the two of us colluded on an evil plan that went better than we could have hoped.
- We are long-estranged siblings.
- You once tried to kill me, and I don't particularly blame you for it.

## Minor Characters :

- Thomas Ashe, champion monster hunter. The father of Edwin, Thomas is bigger and bolder and deadlier than his son in every way. Wears silver-plated chainmail and an army helmet.
- Beadax, an ancient vampire. Creepy and inhuman, Beadax is slow to act, and utterly baffled by mortal affairs. Whomever is playing Beadax puts on a spooky Nosferatu mask and black cloak.
- Eliza, a local ghost. She died in the castle back in the middle ages, well before the Von Derricks took over, and does not think much of her new roommates. Wears a white gown with some clever underwiring which makes it billow away from her like she's floating.
- Morgan King, a representative from the nearest village. Enjoys the protection of local vampires, but would like to cut down on the "getting eaten" bit. Wears an ill-fitting suit.
- Mr. Bones, skeletal butler. A perfect servant who happens to be a reanimated skeleton. Dry, sarcastic, but always professional. Wears a skeleton costume, of course.
- Bruce, a blood bag. A handsome young man who is a bit dim but very healthy, who doesn't so much mind being used for meals in exchange for a place to live. Usually just wearing a tattered robe.
- Jennifer Bennett, a monster-killer. As distinct from a monster hunter, she's not a professional. No oversight, no rules. Dangerous. Wears a dark cat-suit, for sneaking.

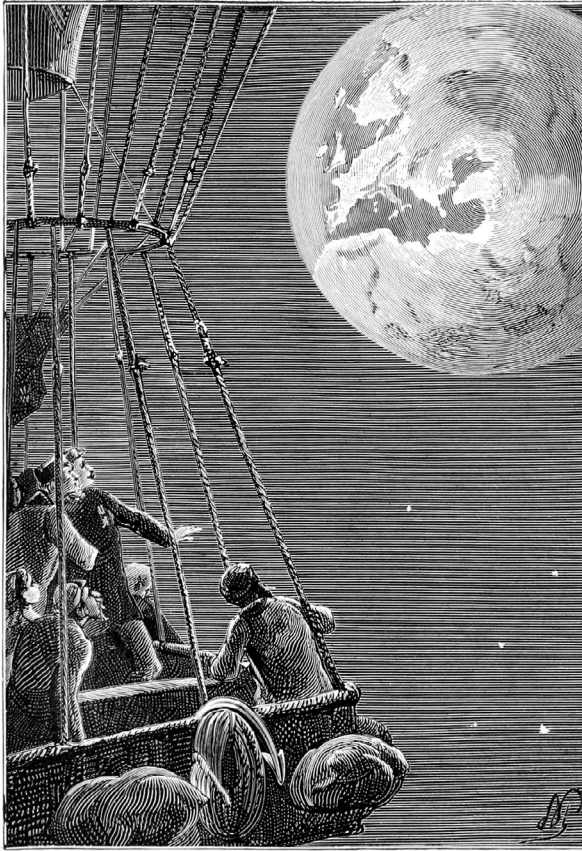
## Props:

- A large, ornate stake. Wooden, with some silver filigree running all along it.
- A human skull, etched with some sort of runes or writing.
- A massive candelabra, holding dozens of candles and casting lots of light.
- A five-foot tall tower shield (made of balsa wood and metallic paint, much lighter than it looks).
- A live bat, flitting about in a gold cage. If you let it out, it will disappear into the rafters.
- A double-headed battle-axe. It's lighter than it looks, but it's about as tall as a person so it's still huge and unwieldy.
- A small book, which might be a pocket journal.

## Opening Tableau:

The clearing in the garden maze stands empty for a moment, until you and another cast member stumble in simultaneously, both having gotten irreversibly lost as you try to make your way to the castle.

(This is, of course, especially embarrassing if one or both of you live in the castle.)



## NOTHING MUCH AT ALL

In a distant corner of the galaxy, the starship *Exodus* journeys from star to star, in a never-ending quest to discover new life and new civilizations. They haven't found anything yet.

To be perfectly honest, they're sure that they aren't going to find anything at all, and it has slowly dawned on the entire crew that they're going to spend the next decade in a tin can accomplishing nothing in particular. The captain and other senior officers have to keep control of a stir-crazy crew, perpetually on the brink of riot, mutiny, or the kind of gross negligence that results in starships exploding.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

## Sets:

- **Act I:** The bridge of a starship. It's all a bit retro-futuristic... blinking lights and dials and buttons on every surface, with an absence of clear labels or diagrams which might actually be useful. The captain's chair is centre stage, and there are more seats down-stage left and right at little consoles where science presumably happens.
- **Act II:** A planet's surface. A completely dead planet's surface; there are rocks (made out of painted foam), and... that's about it. No structures, no plants, no signs of life whatsoever until the actors come onstage.
- **Act III:** An infinite white void. Some clever work angling the flats makes it appear to the audience as if the back walls are just a continuation of the white floor, out to the edge of forever. Soft lighting helps disguise shadows. There is even less anything here than there was back in Act II.

## Dramatis Personae

Captain Alyssa Marcus - The commander of the *Exodus*, the hero of Lower Akeris, the bright shining face of the Space Exploration Force. She's been all over known space, and jumped at the chance to explore strange new worlds. Now that those worlds are proving short on adventure, she is getting antsy indeed. She wears something akin to a leather bomber jacket over her uniform.

- **Vice:** Captain Marcus is an old-fashioned adrenaline junky. Without a little daring adventure, she starts to fall apart.
- **Tragic History:** She, uh, blew up a planet once. Just once, and it was legitimately an accident... she was found not at fault, but her reputation took a big hit.
- **Lie:** Blowing up that planet left her a pariah, but she denies it. Her Lie is "I command great respect among the admirals!"
- **Happy Ending:** Alyssa wants to make this trip worthwhile. She wants to discover something amazing and name it after herself.

Xavier Price - The operations officer of the *Exodus*. Like all operations officers, Xavier is a cyborg; he needs to plug directly into the ship to send and receive information at light speed. He was sick of this mission before it started, and is eager to take any excuse to turn the ship around and go the heck home. He wears a uniform and has cybernetic ports on his arm and face.

- **Vice:** Insubordination. It's not that Xavier doesn't want to follow orders, it's that he enjoys not following orders.
- **Tragic History:** Xavier won't admit it, but he's actually not cyborg... he has no human brain in his head. Instead, he's an experimental artificial intelligence implanted in a cloned human body. Essentially a robot whose body happens to be made of meat.
- **Lie:** As an AI, Xavier is subject to protocols which prevent him from ever doing harm to others. He hates that. He tells everyone "I am very dangerous!"
- **Happy Ending:** One way or another, end this mission.

Victor Wu - The chief engineer of the *Exodus*. It's his job to keep this ship running, which is complicated by the fact that the *Exodus* uses technology from a half-dozen different species. They often don't communicate well or at all, and require very different skills to maintain. Victor isn't really well-informed about these things, but has a knack for hitting stuff until it works again.

- **Vice:** Ancient Earth entertainments. Victor can't get enough of videos of old-world operas.
- **Tragic History:** Victor was cryogenically frozen centuries ago, and only recently re-discovered and thawed out. Space travel is still very new to him.
- **Lie:** He's got a knack for making complex machinery work, but has a harder time with simple details, which is why his Lie for the past few weeks is "I'm not locked out of the engine room!"
- **Happy Ending:** Fame and fortune. Victor Wu wants to be a celebrity, known across the galaxy.

Larella Zha - A member of the Hercollian species. Technically not a crew member, but a passenger, independantly studying exolinguistics on behalf of the Hercollian Empire. This gives her exactly nothing to do if the *Exodus* never meets a new civilization with which she might communicate. She, like all Hercollians, has blue hair with tall antennae protruding from it, and she wears a simple grey jumpsuit.

- **Vice:** Poetry. Not reading it... performing it. For the entire crew. Sometimes in multiple languages.
- **Tragic History:** Zha wanted to be a real crew member, but she didn't pass the Space Exploration Force's entrance exams.
- **Lie:** There's a rumour about that Hercollians use their antennae to read other people's minds. They can't, the antennae are scent receptors, but Zha maintains the Lie: "I am psychic!"
- **Happy Ending:** Exolinguistics, the task Zha was assigned, brings her no joy. No, she wants another chance to join the Space Exploration Force and go on real adventures.

Drzzex - A member of the shape-shifting Zetic species. A protocol officer, responsible for making schedules and apportioning resources, a job which most humans find dull but Zetics generally enjoy. Personally, Drzzex is considered friendly but offputting; their understanding of human culture is... spotty. The form Drzzex takes is humanoid, bald, and wears a standard uniform.

- **Vice:** Eating. Which is distinct from "food"; Zetics feed on inorganic material, and Drzzex is often munching on whatever tools happen to be close at hand.
- **Tragic History:** Drzzex's planet was recently blown up; there may be more Zetics somewhere in the universe, but Drzzex is that last of their kind in known space.
- **Lie:** Wishing to avoid the awkwardness that comes from being the last of their kind, Drzzex is telling everyone "I am a human!"
- **Happy Ending:** Drzzex has fallen in love with a human on the ship, and their happy ending would be entering into a proper relationship. Also, to understand how a human relationship works.

## Relationships :

- We roomed together back at the Academy.
- We spent 100 days trapped on a desolate planet, alone.
- On a recent mission, I saved your life.
- We are lovers, but must keep it secret.
- Due to a teleporter malfunction, we switched bodies for a week once.

## Minor Characters :

- Sergeant Rick Johnson, security officer on the *Exodus*. A real hard-ass. Also, a real ass. Thinks he's the boss of wherever he goes. Wears obnoxious mirrored shades with his uniform.
- Doctor Shannon Ryes, chief medical officer on the *Exodus*. Takes her job very seriously, to an almost paranoid extent... she's too well-informed about rare and deadly diseases. Wears a lab coat.
- Dana-1, navigation officer. Created by illegal genetic engineering, she is the smartest, strongest, and most attractive person on the ship. A fact she knows well. Wears a special uniform that doesn't match anyone else's, because she is just so special.
- Robert "Ditto" Hobbs, disposable officer. Robert Hobbs sold his brain scan and genetic information to the Space Exploration Force, so every ship carries a couple dozen clones of him, ready to break out for dangerous tasks. Wears an easily identifiable red shirt.
- Exy, a robotic avatar of the *Exodus*. She is an extension of the ship's AI, effectively the voice of the *Exodus*. Mostly looks like a human in a fashionable outfit, but a long wire trails from her neck to where she is presumably plugged in, somewhere in the wings.
- Admiral Halsey, the voice of the Space Exploration Force. He's back in known space, but likes dropping in on his ships unannounced using holographic technology. Wears an elaborate uniform and, as a hologram, doesn't interact with objects and speaks with a half-second delay.
- The Watcher. The Watcher watches. The Watcher has its own motives which we cannot understand. The Watcher is covered by a purple cloak and wears a WWI-era diving helmet.

## Props:

- A ray gun. Makes lights and sounds when you pull the trigger.
- A basketball-sized thing covered in wires and blinking lights.  
Could be anything!
- A clear flask of mysterious green liquid. It's an energy drink, so sip it if you want.
- A small, clear disk of plastic, about the size of a playing card.  
Could be a data storage thing?
- A rapier. Fake, so don't be afraid to prod people with it.
- A device the size of a large pen, with a blinking light on the end. A scanner of some sort?
- A boulder made of painted foam, about the size and shape of a sleeping cat.

## Opening Tableau:

It's red alert on the bridge. Alarms are going off, the lights are blinking red. You rush onstage to see what the matter is, and the two crew already there reveal that nothing is going on; they just had a bet going to see how quickly you would show up.



## PATER FAMILIAS

*Made with assistance from NeonJuggler*

Alas, we have come to mourn the passing of Sir Archibald Renwick. He hasn't died quite yet, but the old bat is going to pop literally any second now... his few conscious hours are spent barely aware of his surroundings and often doubled over in rafter-rattling coughing fits. His family has come back to the ancestral estate to say their goodbyes and pay their respects.

Oh, um, and if it's all possible, they might check and see just where they're standing in the will? Because it's almost certainly not too late to do some careful rearranging, right?

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

## Sets:

- **Act I:** The sitting room of the Renwick estate. It is huge and extravagant; the furniture so big and lush that it is a struggle to even sit down. Anything that can conceivably be gilded has been.
- **Act II:** Sir Archibald's bedroom/deathbed. A room, surrounded by bookshelves, dominated by a huge four-poster bed. There's a few beeping medical machines next to the bed as well.
- **Act III:** A lawyer's office. Unlike the rest of the estate, it's small, cramped, and dingy, and the little desk is overflowing with unkempt papers. Against the back wall, a dusty window shows that it is the very dead of night.

## Dramatis Personae:

Archibald "Archie" Renwick Jr. - Sir Archibald's eldest and most disappointing son. Archie could have continued the long family tradition of "not doing anything," but instead... he went into *sport*. Not just any sport, but cricket, the most muddle-headedly common sport, at least in the opinion of Sir Archibald. Archie is now in what could charitably be called his late middle-ages, but still wears a cricketer's outfit like some college boy.

- **Vice:** Athleticism! Archie's well into his prime "sitting around" years, but instead he's the kind of fellow who insists on running a mile when sensible people take a cab.
- **Tragic History:** Like any good athlete, Archie is haunted by the memories of the Big Game that he failed... it was the most important game of his career, and he slept right through it. It cost him his shot in the professional leagues.
- **Lie:** Fortunately, nobody in the extended Renwick clan gives half a hoot about cricket, which is why Archie's Lie is "I used to play professionally for the London Rousters!" That's not even a real team, but who would know that?
- **Happy Ending:** Archie doesn't care much about money, but he would love to earn his father's respect before the old man kicks.

Lady Agatha von Renwick - A distant cousin from the part of the Renwick clan located in Hamburg, Germany. Lady Agatha has the distinction of being even older and more frail than Sir Archibald. Wears an old-fashioned black gown, ready to mourn at the drop of a hat.

- **Vice:** Cockamamie health-care solutions. Vitamin supplements, dietary restrictions, homeopathy and alternative medicine, and maybe a little bloodletting if there's time! You name it, she'll try it and talk a mile about how effective it must be.
- **Tragic History:** Lady Agatha has fallen on hard times, and had to sell her own estate in the German countryside. She now lives... in England. In *London*. Oh, the shame of it!
- **Lie:** Maybe alternative medicine really does work, or maybe she's just got the constitution of a mule, but Lady Agatha is much healthier than she appears. "I'm really quite frail!" she Lies, because it's advantageous to appear a little sick.
- **Happy Ending:** Leave England, and live out the rest of her life (which will probably be extensive!) back in Hamburg.

Bishop Jackson Renwick - Sir Archibald's youngest child. A decade younger than his nearest sibling, he always felt disconnected from his family, and found the structure and support he craved in the church. Now, he's a respected bishop, hoping to claim the bulk of the estate for said church. Wears a black and red bishop's cassock.

- **Vice:** Piety. The Bishop's faith is true, sure, but he also wields his religiosity like a club, to cut down people who annoy him with a very-literally-holier-than-thou attitude.
- **Tragic History:** Jackson is Sir Archibald's son... but he's not actually a Renwick. He's a bastard son, and knew growing up that he wasn't really part of the family.
- **Lie:** Legally, Jackson is not a legitimate heir, but he tells everyone "I am named in the will!" hoping it might somehow be true.
- **Happy Ending:** Money is nice, sure. But Jackson never knew who his mother was; discovering the other half of his parentage is what would truly make him happy.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

Tommy and Tammy Renwick-Smyth - A mischievous young pair of twins. Their parents couldn't come, so they're free to be annoying and nosy and play pranks on their extended family. They wear identical blue school uniforms; Tommy has a bowler, Tammy wears a red bow.

- **Vice:** Exploration! There are so many places to see, and Tommy and Tammy want to see them all. The mansion is full of hidey-holes they are particularly enticed by.
- **Tragic History:** The Renwick-Smyth side of the family made some bad investments. Tommy and Tammy's parents are nearly penniless, forced to, ugh, work for a living.
- **Lie:** So... maybe this is obvious given the fact that these two are sharing an entry, but there's only one Renwick-Smyth child. Tommy or Tammy or whomever has been telling everyone "I have a twin sibling!" and hoping for a double cut of the will. Whenever you come onstage, just pick which one you are at the moment.
- **Happy Ending:** The Renwick-Smyths are living in a microscopic apartment, only ten rooms and two servants! They want to be willed the Renwick estate itself, as a place for the family to live.

Roxanne Grant - Sir Archibald's great grand-niece and, of late, live-in caretaker. She's young and inexperienced, but utterly no-nonsense, and expects her orders to be followed without question. Wears a set of pink scrubs to look more professional.

- **Vice:** Cleanliness, order, organization. Seeing anything out of place will make her eyes twitch and her teeth grind.
- **Tragic History:** Poor Roxanne suffered, as a child, from a debilitating illness from which she has since recovered, but which meant much of her childhood was spent in hospitals of all sorts.
- **Lie:** Roxanne is getting uncomfortable as her patient's health wanes. She doesn't as have much experience with death as she has claimed. Her Lie is "I've definitely seen a dead body before!"
- **Happy Ending:** The price of medical school is well outside Roxanne's reach. If only someone would give her a scholarship, or cash enough to pay her way!

## Relationships :

- Our sides of the family have been openly feuding for years.
- We were close once, but have been estranged of late.
- I owe you just a tremendous amount of money.
- The only thing we have in common is a passion for hunting the ghost which is rumoured to inhabit the Renwick estate.
- We live near one another, and are dear chums, despite being family.

## Minor Characters :

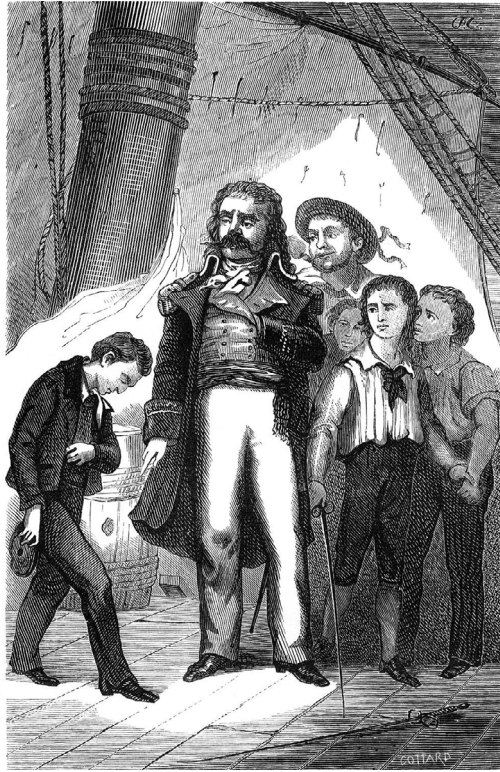
- Jeremy Renwick, Sir Archibald's grandson by way of his favourite daughter Elizabeth. Absurdly wealthy and utterly helpless on his own. Can't button his own shirts. Wears a tuxedo at all times.
- Growler Renwick, Sir Archibald's beloved hunting dog. Reportedly, Growler is getting the bulk of the estate. Wears a red collar (and, presumably, a dog costume).
- Genevieve De La Villa-Darling-Corravin-Renwick, Sir Archibald's granddaughter-in-law. A serial widow, there's some evidence that she's a black widow murderer. Wears a black dress and big pearls.
- Alexa McLeod, Sir Archibald's lawyer. The one actually in charge of knowing where the will is and what it says. Has no sense of humor, may be literally incapable of feeling joy. Wears a grey suit so bland that she's practically invisible.
- Marie St. Germaine, the maid of the Renwick estates. Nosy and well-informed, Marie likes to get very close to people in the house, learn their secrets, and blackmail the heck out of them. Wears, as you might expect, a maid's outfit.
- Jasperforth, the butler. Decades older than Sir Archibald, it's a wonder he's still up and active... but he's very set in his ways and seems almost unaware of changes in routine. Wears a crisp evening coat and red bow tie.
- Doctor Kim Tapek, Sir Archibald's physician. Confused and enamoured by the sheer diversity of ailments that his patient is somehow enduring; intends to write a book on it. Wears a lab coat.

## Props:

- A loosely-bound sheaf of papers (most likely a will).
- A truly massive keyring, overflowing with old brass keys.
- A bright blue vase. It's made out of cheap ceramic, so if you want to smash it, go right ahead.
- A great big photo album, leather bound.
- A candelabrum, bristling with candles.
- A sword cane. Not sure what you might want to do with it, but if you have the option to bring a sword cane on stage, you should not turn it down.
- A very fancy tea set. You know it's fancy because the cups are the size of thimbles.

## Opening Tableau:

You are sprawled out on the furniture in the sitting room with two of Sir Archibald's other relatives. Off stage, someone emulates a ticking clock to indicate the passing time and unendurable boredom of your wait. You break the silence with a loud, abrupt "So, think the old man's kicked it yet?"



## JAUNTY LADS A-SAILING

*Made with assistance from Laurel Halbany*

It's time to take to the sea! The *HMS Didactic* has been charged to sail into the Atlantic on a mission to apprehend the dread pirate Alastair, whose mischief has been the scourge of English Navy for too long. Along the way, there promise to be exciting pirate battles, and cannons firing, and maybe some shanties? Probably some shanties.

Oh, and it's a naval ship in the early 1900s, which means that it's strictly men-only on this crew, so there's obviously women dressed in false moustaches as they jet out on fabulous boating adventures. Obviously.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

## Sets:

- **Act I:** The bridge of a galleon, dominated by the wheel and, behind it, a mast which allows actors to enter and exit the set by climbing up into the crow's nest. The flats in the back display a sunny day, with a few cotton-ball clouds and some hints of land in the distance.
- **Act II:** The same ship; all that has changed are the flats in the back, which now indicate a brilliantly starry night. The spotlights have all got blue gels put over them to make things seem darker.
- **Act III:** The same ship one last time, only now the flats indicate that we have returned to dock: A city looms large nearby, and there are sound effects of stevedores and seagulls in the background.

## Dramatis Personae:

Captain Johnathan Mann - The captain of the ship. Mann is a jolly, Santa-Claus sort of fellow, absolutely charmed to pieces by his crew and their antics. He tries to play the part of a jovial father figure, and is a bit befuddled when it comes to issues of actual seamanship, so his crew tends to cover for him whenever possible. He wears a captain's hat that's just a bit too big for him and hangs on his ears.

- **Vice:** Songs. Shanties if you must, but he'd rather belt out an operatic solo as he stands at the prow.
- **Tragic History:** Mann is a criminal. A forger, actually, who spent a few years in prison after he was caught trying to sell forged Rembrandts to an art gallery.
- **Lie:** After getting out of prison, Mann was surprised to be given a commission and a ship despite having never served in the navy before. It seems there was a clerical error somewhere, so Captain Mann has to maintain the Lie that "I know exactly how ships work, and what all the bits are called!"
- **Happy Ending:** A promotion to admiral would be nice. And it would get him off the actual ships!

Charles Whaler - The first mate. Serious, stern, and by the book to a fault, Whaler is the one who keeps the ship running shipshape. He is often the butt of pranks played by the crew, but he never, ever breaks. He wears a hat just a hair less impressive than the captain's, and has a moustache you could get lost in.

- **Vice:** Duels. Not to the death, that would be uncouth, but Whaler will happily clash swords until anyone who wronged him.
- **Tragic History:** Whaler is on poor terms with his family, who did not want him to take to the sea.
- **Lie:** That family? That would be the royal family. "I am not Charlotte, Princess of Wales, wearing a cheap false moustache!"
- **Happy Ending:** A ship of her own, with a crew that respects her even if she tossed this itchy moustache into the sea.

John Smith - Totally an actual sailor. Not a woman dressed as a man, in order to serve, if that's what you're implying. She... that is to say, *he* wears an utterly immaculate uniform, and has hair that's a fair bit longer than regulation and very well-conditioned.

- **Vice:** Fashion. You'd think that someone in uniform couldn't find a way to show off, but Smith has accessories to spare, and is slowly replacing all his uniform's brass buttons with gold ones.
- **Tragic History:** Smith makes no secret of the fact that his brother was lost at sea, and his central goal in life is to track him down. He'd do anything, up to and including disguising his identity and lying straight to the queen, to aid his search.
- **Lie:** Everybody knows that "John Smith" is actually Jane, disguised as a man to take to the sea. What nobody knows is that... well, Jane is actually in fact John. He has found that disguising himself as a woman disguised as a man earns him a lot of sympathy among the crew, so his Lie is "I'm actually a woman pretending to be a man!"
- **Happy Ending:** John's mission is no lie; his brother is out there somewhere, and all John wants is to be reunited.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

Nancy Artimus, World Explorer! - The greatest explorer in the world! Nancy Artimus has been everywhere, seen it all, and written the book on most of it! She's just here for the adventure! She wears a standard khaki colonial-era explorer outfit, complete with pith helmet.

- **Vice:** Tales of past adventure. Always unbelievable, usually a bit gory, rarely relevant to the issues at hand. Nancy's all too happy to spin a yarn.
- **Tragic History:** Nancy spent several years trapped in Arctic ice, and was only recently brought back to England. She is a little out of touch and significantly out of practice with adventuring.
- **Lie:** Nancy has no official reason to be on board, she just wanted to cross the Atlantic. By way of an excuse, her Lie is "I'm here at the personal request of Charlotte, Princess of Wales!"
- **Happy Ending:** There's only one thing that would make Nancy Artimus happy: a new discovery. An amazing sight, never before seen by human eyes.

The Dread Pirate Alastair - The scourge of the Royal Navy. He's not the most dangerous pirate in the sea, but he is the most maddening, in part because he leaves the crews alive, having stolen most of their cargo and all of their clothes. Too many sailors are coming back to port embarrassed and nude. Alastair wears a slipshod mess of clothes that just screams "pirate!" complete with a massive black hat.

- **Vice:** Love! Alastair will always seize an opportunity to push a couple together if he thinks they'd hit it off.
- **Tragic History:** Alastair used to be a captain in the Royal Navy, until a clerical error cost him his ship. He took up piracy as a result, has a particular grudge against the British.
- **Lie:** Ultimately, Alastair is a sweetheart. Wouldn't hurt a fly. But he has a reputation to maintain, hence his Lie: "I will absolutely kill you if I need to!"
- **Happy Ending:** For all the love stories he's brought to bear, Alastair has never had one of his own. Alas, all he wants in this world is a true love.

## Relationships :

- We are secretly in love.
- We are openly pretending to be in love, but secretly cannot stand one another.
- You wounded me in a duel, ages ago.
- We once spent a week on a desert island, accompanied only by a year's supply of rum.
- We survived the deadliest pirate attack in history, some ages back.

## Ancillary Characters :

- Moppy! A sailor, wearing a standard uniform, who swabs the deck while dancing. He says, nothing, accomplishes little, but *everyone loves him*. He naturally draws all attention while he dances.
- Bloody Anne, second-in-command to Alastair. Anne is a powder keg of barely-contained violence and utterly uncontained profanity. Her actual clothes are barely visible behind the dozens of guns, knives, and swords strapped to every inch of her.
- Ashley, the Captain's daughter, disguised as a common sailor, also named Ashley. Optimistic, romantic, and unfathomably naive. Wears a "uniform" that's clearly hand-made from an old blue dress.
- Cook, the cook. Surly, but with a reputation for wisdom served up while slop gets ladled out. Wears a chef's hat and white apron.
- Marie the Blade, a rival pirate. Called "The blade" not because of her rapier, but because her insults are so cutting that they haunt people for the rest of their days. Wears a modestly-sized pirate hat.
- Francis the cabin boy. A sweet lad, but young. He fundamentally doesn't understand the concept of falsehoods, and blurts out whatever is on his mind the moment it enters his mind. Wears a uniform with short pants and a bandanna over his head.
- Comtesse Marie de Poitier. French money is partially financing this mission, and Comtesse de Poitier is here to make sure it doesn't go to waste, even though nobody wants her around. Haughty, aristocratic, and wearing an unreasonably expensive-looking pink dress.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

## Props:

- A cannon. Rigged to make noise and blast a huge plume of grey smoke on command.
- A pair of duelling rapiers.
- A huge wooden chest, bound in iron bands, with a padlock on the front. It could not say “pirate treasure” any more clearly without an actual label.
- A very convincing animatronic parrot in a cage. Someone offstage can speak into a little microphone to voice the parrot if they wish.
- A great big map, rolled into a tight tube.
- A rubber tentacle, large enough that it can reach from offstage and bat at characters on the ship.
- A lovely brass telescope.

## Opening Tableau:

The scene opens in medias res: you are in a duel with a pirate that has boarded your ship, fighting one-on-one before the wheel. After a few clashes, the pirate is overpowered and chased offstage, presumably back to their ship, and you must alert the crew so that you can all give chase.



## THE WEDDING PARTY

*Made with assistance from Amber Piona*

The venue is perfect. The music is perfect. The food is perfect. Everything is perfect. Everything has to be perfect, that's what wedding days are for, and this couple has spent lots of time and oodles of money ensuring that their special day is going to go down exactly perfectly perfect.

And then, when the day arrives, they're missing. Not at home, not at the venue, not answering their cell phones. Nowhere to be found. Which is probably better than having them be getting in the wedding planner's hair with their nerves and cold feet and whatnot, but the ceremony is coming up pretty quickly and one hopes that there will be someone to marry when it happens.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

## Sets

- **Act I:** A reception hall. Grand, but decorated with an elegant simplicity: a few large flower displays to add a splash of colour to an otherwise plain, large space. Off in the upstage left corner, there's a bar stacked to overflowing with liquors of all kinds.
- **Act II:** A catering display. The stage is still largely plain, with colorful flower displays. This time, however, across the upstage is a buffet-style line of various delicious looking foods, with a place of honour upstage centre where a cake could be kept.
- **Act III:** The altar. A podium stands upstage centre, with a red carpet running down to the apron. There are a few more flower displays on either side, nicely symmetrical.

## Dramatis Personae:

Evelyn Wei - The maid of honour. The bride's bestest bestie back in school; they'd grown a bit apart in years that followed, but Evelyn leapt at the opportunity and rather elbowed her way out of the pack of bridesmaids into the maid of honour spot. Wears a cream-colored dress which, against all odds, is reasonably attractive and flattering.

- **Vice:** Social media. Evelyn is the spider-queen atop a web of social media connections, and she knows any publicly-available information about anyone with any sort of Internet presence.
- **Tragic History:** Just out of school, Evelyn moved across the country for an exciting job in a digital communications company that utterly collapsed within six months. Since then, she's been struggling to keep afloat without much of a support network.
- **Lie:** Evelyn's Lie is "I just got word from the bride and she is definitely on her way!" Actually, she hasn't heard from the bride in about a week... things got somewhat heated at the bachelorette party. But she doesn't want people to know about that.
- **Happy Ending:** Back home, Evelyn has few opportunities to meet new people. She doesn't necessarily need a true love, but gosh she would like someone to spend time with.

Leroy Richmond - The best man. A real charmer, quick with a joke, quicker with a flirt. Leroy is having the time of his life, and the reception hasn't even started yet. He wears a tuxedo which he'll let everyone know is *not* rented. It's his own tuxedo. He's a tuxedo-owning guy and he wants you to know that.

- **Vice:** Braggadocio. You name a place, and he's got an unlikely story about the time he went there, partied for a week with a rock band and then choked a shark to death. Mention an accomplishment, and he did it better, faster, and while punching out a shark. Lots of his stories feature violence against sharks as a through line.
- **Tragic History:** Leroy got bit by a shark once.
- **Lie:** Any story that ends with a dead shark is fake, but everyone more or less knows that. Leroy's actual Lie is "I'm the best man!" In truth, he's just a wedding crasher in over his head.
- **Happy Ending:** Love, of course. But not just any old love: Leroy needs a real good meet-cute. A "how I met your mother" story that's going to get passed down for generations.

Alexis Villanueva - The wedding planner. Loud, bossy, but prone to get distracted when artistic inspiration strikes. She's the one who wants this wedding to go on perfectly, so she's doing the bulk of the "where's the couple?" panicking. Wears a burgundy dress that toes the line between fashionable and professional.

- **Vice:** Cake. That's what got Alexis into the wedding industry in the first place. It's not about the quantity; she just has a desire for small amounts of very well-made cake.
- **Tragic History:** Alexis used to be a baker, actually, specializing in wedding cakes, until an accident with an experimental fondant nearly killed an entire wedding party.
- **Lie:** Alexis assumes that customers would be more inclined to listen to a wedding planner with personal experience, which is why her Lie is "I am married!"
- **Happy Ending:** In fact, Alexis would like to be married. But only to someone who shares her love of baked goods.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

Father Patrick Luther - The officiant. A priest well into the “late” side of “late middle age,” he’s a bit forgetful and hard of hearing and prone to ramble on into long incoherent stories about nothing at all. Wears, as you might expect, a priest’s collar.

- **Vice:** Monologuing. Father Patrick loves the sound of his own voice, and will speak at length about anything.
- **Tragic History:** Father Patrick has a lost love; they were separated by happenstance during the war, and were never able to find one another again.
- **Lie:** “Father” Patrick hasn’t exactly completed seminary. Or started it. For years, his Lie has been “I’m an ordained minister!”
- **Happy Ending:** Patrick has never let go of his lost love, and can imagine no ending happier than a tearful reuniting.

Agnes Thatcher - The dove lady. She raises and cares for doves, and when the moment of truth happens she’ll release them and they’ll take off into the sky. She’s older, shy and self-effacing, especially among the younger and more intense people. Wears a rather plain light grey gown and a truly hideous grey felt hat.

- **Vice:** Disco music. She doesn’t care what people think: she has a groove thing, and she wants to shake it to the sweet sounds of the 1970s.
- **Tragic History:** Agnes fell into dove-handling recently, rather by accident, after being laid off from her previous career as a dressmaker because her designs were too “old-fashioned.”
- **Lie:** Turns out, Agnes loves raising doves, and damned if she’s going to release those doves to be eaten by cats or sucked into jet engines or whatever. She’s saying that “I’ve got the doves!” when they are, in fact, safe at home.
- **Happy Ending:** Perhaps it’s obvious this far into the *Dramatis Personae*, but Agnes just wants to find love with someone who is willing to love her doves just as much.

## Relationships

- We had a torrid affair, pretty recently.
- Were married once. Once.
- We dated some time in the past, but it ended amicably.
- I had the biggest crush on you way back when, but you had no idea who I was.
- We met before on a speed-dating service (and resoundingly rejected one another).

## Ancillary Characters

- Sammy, the ring bearer. An unbearably adorable youngster who really ought to be under the watchful eye of a parent or guardian. Steals anything not nailed down. Wears a suit five sizes too big.
- Eliza, the organist. She plays the organ, and dramatically overestimates the importance of the organ playing to the wedding process. Is pretty sure this will all fall apart without her. Wears an elaborate and gauzy blue dress.
- Charlotte Orton, the owner of the venue. For someone who rents out space for weddings, she hates weddings. She doesn't like the chaos and noise, and is terrified that the space will get damaged. Wears a red sweater vest and horn-rimmed glasses.
- Chuckie Dazz, the bartender. A simple soul with a funny name, Chuckie doesn't know anything about anything that's not making drinks. Is convinced that all problems can be solved by a well-made cocktail. Wears a black vest and bow tie.
- Milla Vargas, the caterer. Constantly stressed and easily apoplectic, she should be in the kitchen making the food perfect, so every second she spends elsewhere is a second she spends wanting to kill everyone in sight. Wears a white apron and chef's hat.
- An audaciously, impressively drunk guy. He's too incomprehensible for anyone to figure out where he's supposed to sit, but he's in good spirits. Wears a tux with a slightly battered top hat.
- Doctor Smiley, a birthday party clown. He was misinformed about what day he was meant to show up at this venue, and is unwilling to leave until he's paid. Dressed like a clown, naturally.

## Props

- An outrageously large bouquet of flowers.
- A bottle of champagne. An actual bottle, so you can open it onstage with a mighty pop, but it's the cheap stuff so if you want to dump it out on the floor, go right ahead.
- A huge, three-tiered wedding cake on a rolling stand.
- A cute little blue velvet-covered box containing a gold ring.
- An outsized video camera that's about a decade obsolete.
- A microphone. Actually hooked into the theatre's PA system, so if you try to talk into it you will get actual amplification (and actual feedback).
- A basket overflowing with artificial red rose petals.

## Opening Tableau

A couple of people are onstage already, pacing about awkwardly. You run onstage, shouting something like "Alright people, the ceremony starts in an hour, so I just want to make sure everything and everyone is present and accounted for."

At which point, one of the others will point out that neither of the betrothed have bothered to show up just yet.

At which point you panic and fall over.



*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*



## CASTING CALL

In this game, you are actors. That's part of the background fiction, but it's not a very dominating part of the game—the focus is on the characters you portray. Your “actor” identities don't even get names! This chapter is an optional tweak to correct for that, and inject a little extra spice into the goings-on by allowing you, as players, to portray actors, who themselves portray characters. Who may, if you wish, be actors themselves. Playing their own characters. And so on, ad infinitum.

The point being, if you want some guidelines for “being an actor,” this chapter is here to support you.

## SETUP ( WITH ACTOR ARCHETYPES )

Prior to doing any of the backstage setup, have everyone select one of the **archetypes** found on the following pages. Create a name for yourself, and take a moment to introduce yourself to the other players.

Then, as a group, answer the following questions, to fill out the theatre a little bit:

- The Westland Theatre is hardly the most respected playhouse in the world. Or in the city. Or on the block. Where is this theatre?
- More to the point, how was it that the last show at the Westland went terribly awry? Did someone die on stage? Was it worse than that?

- You have it on good authority from the Producer's mother's hairdresser that someone of great importance will be in the audience tonight. Who is it you have to worry about impressing?
- You are actors. You are dedicated professionals. You take your craft seriously. So. Gossip. Who's sleeping with whom here? And who isn't supposed to find out?

Once you've gotten through all of that business, step into character. Start acting in the manner of your archetype, even as you go through all of the backstage setup. You might be writing words on little index cards, but you are doing so as no mere player of games, but as a right proper actor!

## THE ARCHETYPES

These archetypes will be described in more detail on the following pages, but the cut and thrust of what they are is as follows:

- **The Star:** A boundless egotist who sincerely believes they are who the audience is here to see, even if they're playing *Tree #2*.
- **The Method Actor:** Someone who gets into their roles. Annoyingly into their roles. Distressingly into their roles.
- **The Stagehand:** Not an actor. Just not an actor at all. Here because someone has to fill this role. So sorry.
- **The Thespian:** A proper stage actor. Shakespearean. Beloved. Better than this tiny little show. Not afraid to say so.
- **The Bit-Player:** An old pro. Not really into this acting thing; they'll say the lines, but they're here for the post-show beers.
- **The Up-and-Comer:** Young, enthusiastic, and really, really hoping this is their ticket to the big time. The big time!
- **The Hack:** A comedian, and that's in the most pejorative possible sense. If a pie presents itself, they will greet it face-first.
- **The Model:** A little... distracted. A little... distant. Sometimes hard to make them focus. But oh! Those cheekbones.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

## PLAYING YOUR ARCHETYPE

The archetypes are, as the name implies, broadly-drawn descriptions of certain persons who are likely familiar to those who have spent time in theatre. They are outlines to provide a hint of direction and flavour to the characters you create and the shenanigans on which they embark.

Your archetype contains a description, which gives you the background info you need, and three specific guidelines for you to follow. This starts with your **look**, which will guide the sorts of costumes and props you're likely to create. If your look is big and extravagant, then you will wear costumes of that sort whenever possible. If your look is simple and austere, you will be most likely to handle props of a similarly basic design.

Next is your **style**, which defines your general method of approaching the process of acting. This is, of course, a guide, and not a chain by which you are bound... use it as inspiration, and take it as far as your comfort and ability allow.

Finally, you have a **goal**, which is a little event which you are hoping to make happen over the course of the play. There's no punishment for failing to do so, beyond the shame of failure of course, but it does serve to give you some motivation on top of the simple desire to make it to the final curtain without passing out.

Oh, and if you **do** manage to achieve your goal, you may add five Audience Favor tokens to your total at the end of the game, when determining the order of bows and assigning the responsibility of naming the play. The audience can tell when someone is playing to their strengths, you see.

# THE STAR

It doesn't matter if you're spotlit at centre stage or lost amidst the chorus, you know full well that you are who the audience is here to see. They might not know it yet, but that is a forgivable sin. You just need to act with enough glamour, grace, and volume that nobody will be able to look away.

## **Your look:**

Big. Extravagant. You sparkle, even in places where one normally shouldn't. You will catch every eye in the house.

## **Your style:**

Bold, brash, and above all, dominating. You won't steal the spotlight from someone, you're not a cad. But when eyes are on you, you will OWN the stage.

## **Your goal:**

Prove that you've got range... work a musical number into the show.



*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

# THE METHOD ACTOR

It's called The Method. These jokers you work with might "get into character," when the curtain rises, but you become a character with your entire body, soul, and being. Even offstage. Especially offstage! That's what being a professional actor entails!

## Your look:

Always in costume, and the costume is always perfectly accurate and realistic. Even before the play starts, you're in a costume left over from your last show.

## Your style:

It's all about being real. You don't push a style, you just... you just *are*, you know?

## Your goal:

You might have to change your character. That happens. That's part of the show. But you will never, ever break character, not even during intermissions, until the final bow.



# THE STAGEHAND

Okay, so you're not, technically, an actor. Or... or at all an actor. You're definitely not an actor, you're a stagehand, and sometimes you're onstage to play essential roles like Person #3 or Unnamed Corpse, but really you build sets and move props and that's all you want to do. But desperate times call for desperate actors.

## **Your look:**

Aggressively casual. Denim and plaid. You like denim and plaid.



## **Your style:**

Panicky and uncomfortable. You don't like being in front of the audience!

## **Your goal:**

Not just spend time offstage, but really hone your offstage craft. Prove that you can get a laugh from a proper application of sound effects, lighting cues, and curtain drops.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

# THE THESPIAN

You are a professional. You performed Shakespeare before the Queen! You are better than this. But, alas even old hands fall on hard times, and here you are working with under-prepared idiots. So fine. You'll do the show, because the show must go on, but you'll be damned rather than half-ass it.

**Your look:**

Simple and sombre. Think black turtle-necks.

**Your style:**

Dramatic. You are going to show the audience ALL the emotions a human can possess, and then some!

**Your goal:**

Three words: Death.  
Scene. Monologue.



# THE BIT PLAYER

You figured out this acting thing years ago: pass on the big roles, and stick to attendants, servants, and whatnot. Stride onstage, deliver an essential line, and then kip off for a snack or a smoke or a snooze. You get to practice your funny voices. You get to take lots of costumes home. And if you miss a cue or two, things generally still work out.

## Your look:

Shabby. Not shabby chic either. Sometimes strangers hand you their spare change.



## Your style:

Eh... eclectic. You're not really in the habit of staying in character for more than a line or two, and paying attention to your surroundings is a bit of a challenge.

## Your goal:

Do what you do best: portray every single ancillary character at least once. Give each a funnier voice than the last.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

# THE UP-AND-COMER

You are an actor. Nobody can say you're not an actor. You're as professional as the rest of them, even if all your jobs thus far have been less "Shakespeare" and more "advertisements for medicinal soap." This play was supposed to be your big break, so you're going to make it work. Even if someone gets killed in the process!

## Your look:

Unoriginal; a slightly cheaper attempt to mimic whichever other actor you think is worth mimicking.

## Your style:

Enthusiastic! The only director's note you've received in your life is "Smile more and make sure the product label is visible," so that's what you're going with.

## Your goal:

You've never quite ever been the absolute centre of attention before. So... maybe you can arrange it so that you're the only person on stage, just for the length of a short soliloquy.



# THE HACK

You've done stand-up. You've done vaudeville. You've done birthday-party clown work. You are a comedian. Not a particularly gifted one, sure, but dedicated! And elated. And sometimes medicated? Huh, you should jot that down, you can work with that.

## Your look:

The joking starts when the audience first gets a look at you. You've got a little bit of clownishness in your duds: bright colours, silly ties, battered hats. Big floppy shoes are just a toe over the line. Ha!

## Your style:

Let's call it "sufficient." The play is just a medium for the punchlines, so you push through the dull bits, and perk up when you can tell a joke, drop a pun, or otherwise make with the ha-has.

## Your goal:

Obviously you want to make the audience laugh... but you know what's always a hoot? When the actors crack up. Oh yeah, you're going to deliver a goof that makes someone break, you guarantee it.



*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

# THE MODEL

You look good. You look damn good. More to the point, you look damn good at a professional level, which is why you were hired. You aren't much of an actor, but astronauts aren't great police officers either, you know? That's just not the skill you've invested in.

## Your look:

Just a bit risqué. You're a professional. You're not going to go shocking or indecent, not all the time anyway. You're just going to make sure you turn a few heads.

## Your style:

Not... awful, just a bit... broad, you know? A bit "fifth-grade school play," you know? Hit your mark and say your lines energetically and if something goes wrong, pretend it didn't!

## Your goal:

You know, what would be nice? An excuse for some extravagant costume changes. Find a good reason to change your outfit for every act.



# RULES SUMMARY

## You will need:

- 3-5 players
- Index cards (8+ per player)
- Character sheets (1 per player)
- Writing implements
- Audience Favour tokens (pennies, glass beads, or similar, about 10 per player)
- A Spotlight token (a paper fan, or anything similarly easy to see and hand off from one player to another)

## Character and Play Creation

1. Each player, without consulting one another, takes one or two index cards and writes a possible set on each.
2. As a group, select three or more sets that seem to work well together, and use them to determine the broad setting of the play.
3. Every player creates one main character.
  - a. Start with a concept appropriate to the setting.
  - b. Give them a vice (or virtue). Something to motivate them.
  - c. Give them a tragic history that details their private pain.
  - d. Establish a relationship with the player to your left.
  - e. Give your character a name and detail their costume.
4. Establish the character arc for your main character.
  - a. Determine the Lie that they are actively covering up, and which will lead to their embarrassment and downfall.
  - b. Determine a happy ending they might strive towards (or get thrust upon them, undeserving).
5. Each player writes one useful prop on an index card.
6. Each player writes a minor character—with a name and costume—on an index card and makes a little standee.
7. Every player creates an “OFFSTAGE” standee, takes three Audience Favour tokens, and the player whose character is of the highest social standing takes the Spotlight token.

## Gameplay

1. Decide which set the act will take place on. The player with the Spotlight token is the focus of the first Spotlight Scene. Someone offstage shouts “Curtain!” to start the act.
2. During a Spotlight Scene, the action focuses on the Spotlight Character. Their Lie will be confronted, and they must respond by making the Lie bigger. During Act III, the Lie will be revealed.
  - a. Other players may come on and offstage, playing their main character or minor characters. Display the appropriate standee so everyone knows who and where you are.
  - b. Players whose characters are onstage must maintain character at all times. If you fail, spend an Audience Favour token.
  - c. The only objects you can interact with are props, and only those which are in your possession. Use the index cards to track who has what props.
  - d. Players who are offstage may create sound and lighting effects, pick up props, or change costumes.
  - e. If another player particularly amuses you, reward them with an Audience Favour token from the central supply.
3. Once a Lie has been confronted, the Spotlight Character checks the act’s box on their standee, passes the Spotlight token to anyone who hasn’t had it this act, and goes offstage. The focus shifts to the new Spotlight Character with no break in the action.
4. If every character has taken their turn in the spotlight, wrap up the act. A character must drop a *bon mot*, after which someone offstage shouts “Curtain!” to end the act.
5. During Act III, in addition to having their Lie confronted, each player must achieve their happy ending, and check off the appropriate box, before the act can end.
6. During the intermissions after Acts I and II, players may change their character’s happy ending and create one new prop, minor character, or costume for their main character.
7. After Act III, take a curtain call. Whomever has the most Audience Favour gets to bow last, and decides the title of the play.

## CHARACTER SHEETS

In the opposite page, you will find a character sheet for *By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*. Isn't it lovely?

You are free to make a copy of it on whatever photocopying device you have access to. If the kind scrivener at the copy shop gives you trouble, have them read this page, in which I say “Hey, copy shop employee! I respect your dedication to copyright protection, but I, the author of this book, am explicitly giving permission to the possessor of this book to make copies of this page for their own personal use! Thank you!”

To get your character sheets operational, fold them down at the upper line (just above the “Concept and Name” section) and up at the lower one (just below the “Costume section”). The bottom section of the sheet will sit flat on the table, and the top bits will form a little tent.

Or you can eschew character sheets entirely and keep all this information on one random piece of paper or contained entirely in your heads. Do whatever brings you joy.

|  |  |   
End | Act III | Act II | Act I

Lie:



Concept and Name:

Costume:



Vice (or Virtue):

Tragic History:

Relationship (to the left):

Relationship (to the right):

Lie:

Act I

Act II

Act III

Happy Ending:

End

By the Author of *Lady Windermere's Fan*



# EPILOGUE

## Final Act

[Scene: The side door leading out of the Westland Theatre Company. It is night-time. The door is plain, set into an unassuming brick wall; clearly it is not the intended entrance. The ground is littered with cigarette butts.]

[There is the sound of applause, muffled, which slowly dies down. The **Director** arrives, leans against the wall, and begins smoking. Shortly, the **Lead** opens the door and steps out.]

**Lead:** There you are!

**Director:** No, no I think you're mistaken.

**Lead:** I am not. Come in, we've tracked down several bottles of celebratory champagne, as well as a pair of sabres with which we can gamely attempt to open them.

[The **Director** shrugs.]

**Director:** I can't say I'm in the mood, unfortunately.

**Lead:** Really? Did you not hear the audience? The applause? The laughter? The whistling? The distinct sound of people not demanding refunds? We succeeded! We made a play happen today, and that demands celebratory champagne.

**Director:** I don't deny that it was an achievement but... well... I had a closer look at the flier for this show.

**Lead:** Hm. I can't say that I've ever known good things to result from reading a piece of paper.

**Director:** Nor I. Were you aware that this is a six-week engagement?

**Lead:** Oh heavens. With shows every day?

**Director:** And a matinee on Sundays.

**Lead:** Hm. Do you imagine they expect us to put on a play which is... substantially the same as the one we just did?

**Director:** I would presume so. Do you remember your character's name?

[The Lead ponders for a moment, and then shrugs.]

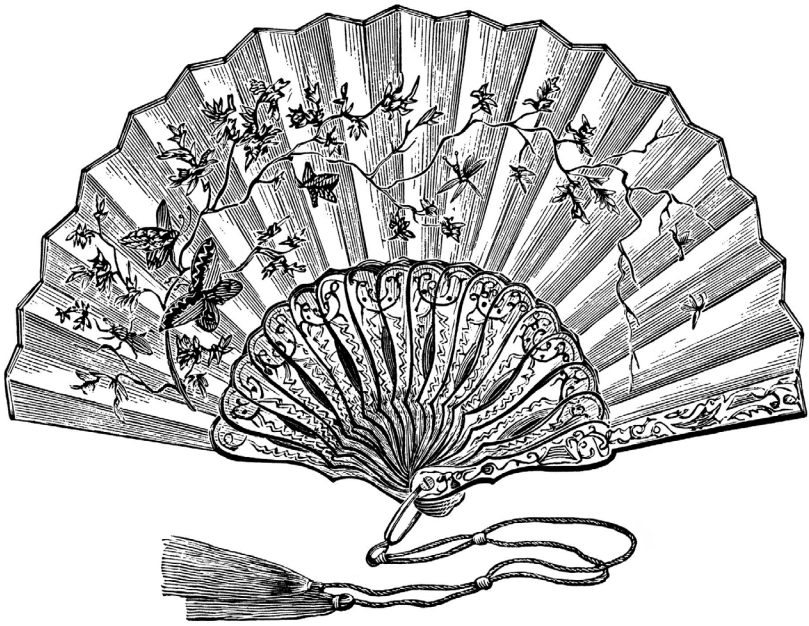
**Lead:** Not as such. Ah, well, you had best come with me then. It seems that what we have several bottles of what is, in fact, despair champagne. Even more delicious, and altogether too valuable to waste.

[They exit.]

Act Drop

Fin.

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*



# VALUED PATRONS

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan* was made possible only through the support of my Kickstarter backers. They are the true believers, the heroes of these Wilde lands. The very least I could do is list here their names, or the pseudonyms by which they have asked me to credit them.

Most excitingly, while they will be forced to age and bear the weight of their sins, this list and their name on it will remain pristine and untouched by time, so long as you don't spill a soda on your book or something like that.

Without further ado, the people who made this possible:

Aaron Griffin	Carl Rigney
Adam Marler	Carl Schnurr
Alexander Gambon	Caroline Hobbs
Alexandra Kristina	Charles E J Etheridge-Nunn
Anastasia Ash	Clayton Grey @ Laboratory
Alexia Equinox Longglass	Clint
Andrew Bleecker	Colette Isabella
Ash Cheshire & Jozy Zim	Côme Martin
Avery Ellison	Curtis Davies
Aybars Yurdun	Dan and Martine O'Day
Bay	Daniel Ley
Ben Robbins	Daniele Di Rubbo
Bill & Melissa Sundwall	Danny Montage
Bill Ayakatubby	Dave Mansfield
Bob and Dana	David Starner
Brendan Adkins	Dawn Marie Pares, Punchmaster
Brian E. G. Williams	General
brother	The Demolissionary
Burnt	The Devourer of Souls
Caitlin "Cecily" Grace	Dorian David Leigh
Calvin Studzinski	Doug Atkinson

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

Doug Hurst	John C Barstow
Ed Kowalczewski	John J. Allen III
Edouard Contesse	John Petritis
Eike Bentley	John Rios
The Enevoldsens	Jon Robertson
Erin Karcher	Jonathon Dyer
Ernest Peregrine	Jordan Block
Evonne Lee	Josh McIlwain
Felisberto Lagartinha	Juan E. Oliverez
Fred Lott	Juliet Youngren
Gavin Verhey	Justin Hamilton
Gilana Chelimsky	K
Gilbert Podell-Blume	Kathleen K. Fuller
Gregory Hammond	Keith Springam
Haya Nasser	Kielo Maria Maja
Henrique R. Vasquez	Krissi & Grant Woodward
Ian A	Kristen Larson
Ian Fabry	Ku Hap
Ian McFarlin	Lady Cheryl Platz
J. John DiBenedetto, Esquire	“Larid” Ron
J.C.	(not “Ernest”) Smay
Jack Gulick	Larry Nehring
Jacob Elias	Laurel Halbany
James and Claire Dunning	Leslie Ambedian
James Cruise	Lester Ward
James Winward-Stuart	Lorenzo Gatti
jamie	Luke Howard Earl
Janine S.	M. Sean Molley
Jay Griffin	Manny Payan
Jeff Dieterle	Mark Ferguson
Jeff Nivin	Martin Schramm
Jenna Stew	Mathew M.
Jess Unrein	Matt Youngmark
Jim Matt	Matthias & Maria Seyfferth
Jim Ryan - Yes, THAT	Megan Coppock
Jim Ryan	Megan Dansie

Mendel Schmiedekamp	Ramona Piona
Merry Crystal	Rebecca Gold
Michael Tomczak	Renee Knope-Conde
Michel Cayer	Rick Dean
Michele "Snake" Gelli	Rob James
Mike Hourigan	Rob Jauquet
Mike Shema	Robert Swan
Monica Varona	Sanabear
My Nemesis.	Sandi Crenshaw
Naepa	Scourger
NeonJuggler	Seth Hartley
Nicholas wen	Sharon Underberg
Nicola Urbinati	Shinners
Nuance Bryant	Simon Ward
Orlando Hill	Spencer and Piper Zito
Our hero Andy	Stelle Ing
Patrice Mermoud	Stuart McIntosh
Patrick & Samantha Harris	Tim Rudloff
Patrick Knowles	Tomohisa Naka
& Tyler Lominack	Travis Stout
Paul Cassella	Trip Space-Parasite
Paul Turner	Tyler's Wayne Detrick
Philip Kelley	Veronica Hamilton
Phredd Groves	W. David Lewis
Poppy the Barmaid	Waning Gibbous Games
Professor Graxley Fundament	

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*



## ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

The illustrations in this book are Victorian-era etchings and engravings from a variety of artists and sources. Well, Victorian-ish; some pre- or postdate the era, and many are not British. In fact, most are French, with some Russian and American as well.

- **Cover:** The Delineator Magazine, ad for *Masquerade and Carnival: Their Customs and Costumes*.
- **Page i and page 135:** Professor G. A. Gaskell, illustration from *Gaskell's Compendium of Forms Educational Social Legal and Commercial*.
- **Page 8:** Tony Johannot, decorative stationary from *Mes Prisons*.
- **Page 13:** Eugène-André Champollion, illustration of Théâtre de la rue des Fossés Saint-Germain.
- **Page 16:** Paul Gavarni, “My darling, tell me your first name.”
- **Page 21:** Scipio Moorhead, etching of Phillis Wheatley, the first African-American female poet published in the United States.
- **Page 23:** Paul Gavarni, “A new novel, a young love, an old pipe.”
- **Page 25:** John Thomas Smith, illustration from *Vagabondia*.
- **Page 26:** Fredrick Henry Townsend, Gryll Grange.
- **Page 30:** Tony Johannot, an author from *Le Diable Boiteux*.
- **Page 32:** Horace Castelli, illustration from *Heur et Malheur*.
- **Page 35:** Maurice Sand, Columbina, from *Masques et Bouffons*.
- **Page 37:** Paul Gavarni, “At the Top of the Mountain.”
- **Page 39:** Byam Shaw, The Spectacles.
- **Page 43:** Maurice Sand, Comedy, from *Masques et Bouffons*.
- **Page 44:** The Delineator Magazine, illustration of a mourning outfit.
- **Page 46:** J N Gaillard, illustration from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.
- **Page 49:** George Cruikshank, “Battle of the Nile.”
- **Page 52:** George Du Marier, illustration from *Wives and Daughters*.
- **Page 55:** Louis Le Breton, illustration from *Dictionnaire Infernal*.
- **Page 59:** Frédéric de Courcy, “A Toast.”

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

- **Page 61:** The Delineator Magazine, illustration of a lady with a fan.
- **Page 64:** J Godwin, illustration of “The Opera.”
- **Page 66:** John Tenniel, illustration of “The Raven.”
- **Page 68:** Paul Gavarni, “At the Theater.”
- **Page 74:** Paul Gavarni, “Woman Holding a Glass.”
- **Page 80:** Horace Castelli, illustration from *Les Mystères de la Science*.
- **Page 86:** William Hole, “Address to the Deil” from *The Poetry of Robert Burns*.
- **Page 92:** Paul Dominique Philippoteaux, “Europe! Russia! France!” from *Hector Sevadac*.
- **Page 98:** The Cornhill Magazine, “Here is a Ducat.”
- **Page 104:** Frédéric de Courcy, illustration from *Aventures de Robert-Robert et de son Fidèle Compagnon Toussaint Lavenette*.
- **Page 110:** Herbert Cole, illustration from “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”
- **Page 116:** Thomas E. Hill, a bride, from *Hill’s Manual of Social and Business Forms*.
- **Page 120:** Paul Gavarni, Fancy Dress 12, from “Douze nouveaux travestissements.”
- **Page 121:** Paul Gavarni, Cacique, from *Le Bal Chicard*.
- **Page 122:** Paul Gavarni, a student, from “Les français peints par eux-mêmes.”
- **Page 123:** M. Khan, illustration from *On the Tribes of the Globe, with Pictures*.
- **Page 124:** Stanslaw Belza, illustration from *Na Lagunach*.
- **Page 125:** The Designer Magazine, illustration of a lady’s circular wrap.
- **Page 126:** Paul Gavarni, “Mr. Flaumann.”
- **Page 127:** The Designer Magazine, illustration of a Victorian Evening Gown.
- **Page 139:** J. J. Grandville, illustration from *Cent Proverbes*.

# INDEX

## A

- About 7
- Acts 51–57
  - Ending an Act 57
- Applause 62–63
- Archetypes
  - The Bit Player 124
  - The Hack 126
  - The Method Actor 121
  - The Model 127
  - The Stagehand 122
  - The Star 120
  - The Thespian 123
  - The Up-and-Comer 125
- Audience Favour 9, 34, 46–49, 63

## B

- Bon Mots* 57, 61
- Bow, Taking a 62–63
- Breaking Character 42–43, 47

## C

- Casting Call 117–119
- Character Creation 20–29
  - Character Arcs 27–29
  - Concept 20–21
  - Name and Costume 25–26
  - Relationships 24
  - Tragic History 22–23
  - Vice 22
  - Virtue. See Vice

- Character Sheet 20, 130–131
- Confrontation 54, 55
- Costumes 25, 59
- Curtain 45, 52
  - Curtain Call 62–63

## E

- Epilogue 133–134
- Example Setup. See Melmoth, Sebastian

## H

- Happy Ending 29, 59, 60
- House Lights 53

## I

- Illustration Credits 140–141
- Index Cards 16, 31, 32, 33
- Intermission 59–60
- Introduction 1–5

## L

- LARPing 41
- Laughter 47–48
- Lie 27–28, 54, 59
  - Escalating Lies 55–56
  - Revealing your Lie 60–61

## M

- Mapping the Stage. See Tactical Battlemap
- Materials 9. See also Index Cards
- Melmoth, Sebastian 17, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 28, 29, 31, 33, 34
- Minor Characters 32–33, 44, 60

*By the Author of Lady Windermere's Fan*

## **O**

Offstage 33, 44  
Onstage 42–43

## **P**

Patrons 136–138  
Permadeath (Optional) 48  
Playbills 65–114  
    A Bite at the Castle 86–91  
    Faerie Scholars 80–85  
    Florentine, The 74–79  
    Jaunty Lads a-Sailing 104–  
        109  
    Nothing Much at All 92–97  
    Pater Familias 98–103  
    Theatrical Engagement, The  
        68–73  
    Wedding Party, The 110–115  
Props 30–31, 43, 60

## **R**

Rules Summary 128–129

## **S**

Safety Mechanisms 53  
Self-Indulgent Monologues 12–13  
Sets 15–17, 51  
Setting 18–19  
Social Status 34  
Special Effects 44

Spotlight 9, 54

    Passing the Spotlight 57

    Spotlight Scenes 54

    Spotlight Token 9, 34, 51, 60

Stagecraft 38–39

## **T**

Tactical Battlemap 40–41

Teaching the Game 15, 36, 50, 58,  
    62

Title of the Play 63

## **V**

Victorian Social Mores 18

## **W**

Wilde, Oscar 10–11

    Imitation thereof 1–143

