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RANK STRANGERS

First draft of a short film

by

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1. INT. SINGLE ROOM IN A HOSPITAL DAY 1.

DIRK WYLDE, 50s, an AIDS patient in terminal care, lies in the bed. He is sleeping. A drip is connected to his wrist. He looks very sick. The clock says 12.29pm.

A nervous young priest, MICHAEL DOOLAN, 20s, knocks and enters the room uncertainly. WYLDE wakes up.

DOOLAN
Excuse me, is this where the...

WYLDE
This is the place.

DOOLAN
Where's everybody else?

WYLDE
You're early.

DOOLAN
I suppose they can't come until their lunch break. I don't really get a lunch break, in the conventional sense. I mean I have lunch, but... oh I'm sorry for carrying on. I'm a little nervous. I haven't done this sort of thing before.

WYLDE
You think I have?

DOOLAN
Well no. No of course not.

WYLDE
So you're a priest then are you?

He holds out his hand. DOOLAN is a bit apprehensive about touching him, but then darts forward and shakes quickly.

DOOLAN
Father Doolan.

WYLDE
I'm Dirk Wylde.

DOOLAN

Yes. Yes I know.

WYLDE

Aren't you a bit young to be a Father?

DOOLAN

Well... I haven't been with the church long.

WYLDE

And where do you stand on the whole question of the right to die, Father?

DOOLAN

I try to keep an open mind.

WYLDE

Glad to hear it, Father, glad to hear it. Do me a favour, would you?

DOOLAN

Of course.

WYLDE

Could you pass me that tray, Father?

DOOLAN

This one?

WYLDE nods. DOOLAN brings over a tray covered with a towel. DOOLAN looks on, horrified, as WYLDE takes a loaded hypodermic from the tray and shoves it into his arm.

WYLDE

Ah...

DOOLAN

What's that?

WYLDE

It's very high grade, I'll tell you that much. Nothing but the best in this wing of the hospital. Hard to wait for the nurse sometimes. You know how it is.

DOOLAN

Are you in a lot of pain?

WYLDE

Not any more! Hey Father, while
you're up, could you get me that
bottle from over there?

DOOLAN gets the bottle.

DOOLAN

What's it for?

WYLDE

What do you think it's for? I need a
piss!

DOOLAN

Oh.

WYLDE

Well don't just stand there, bring
it here!

DOOLAN brings it to the side of the bed. He slips it under
the sheet. WYLDE empties his bladder.

WYLDE (CONT)

That's better. You can take it away
now, Father.

DOOLAN takes the now full bottle out from under the bed
clothes. He looks about for somewhere to put it.

WYLDE (CONT)

I've been waiting a long time for
this, you know, Father.

DOOLAN

(looks at the bottle)
For this?

WYLDE

No, no. For the law to change, you
stupid bastard.

DOOLAN

There's no need to be abusive.

WYLDE

I'm sorry Father. The pain sometimes
makes me short tempered. Do you know
how long I've been lying here?

DOOLAN shakes his head.

WYLDE (CONT)

Five years this Tuesday.

DOOLAN

That long?

WYLDE

I suppose you're wondering why I haven't dropped off the twig of my own accord. But the HIV virus is a funny thing. Plays games with a man. Takes him to the edge of death and then leaves him there. Laughs at him. Days and nights I've laid here, Father, thinking about the past. Weighing things up, you might say.

DOOLAN

And have you come to any understanding?

WYLDE

My understanding, Father, is that nothing amounts to anything. Life is a joke, and God is a bloody clown. Am I offending you, Father?

DOOLAN

I wouldn't say that, no. In fact I've been having some doubts myself lately.

Suddenly a lawyer, CLYDE DRISCOLL, enters. He's in his 30s. DRISCOLL looks at the urine bottle with distaste.

DOOLAN (CONT)

Are you here for the panel?

DRISCOLL

Clyde Driscoll. The bloody firm sent me. I didn't get any choice.

Then he sees WYLDE.

DRISCOLL (CONT)

Is he the... um...

DOOLAN puts the bottle down.

DOOLAN

That's Mister Wylde, yes. I'm Father Doolan.

DRISCOLL

Aren't there supposed to be three of us?

WYLDE

Yes there are supposed to be three of you, and you're bloody late.

DRISCOLL

Steady on, Mr Wylde. I had an assault and battery case over at the court. I came as fast as I could.

WYLDE

Well don't mind me, sir. A few more minutes in deadly agony won't make any difference. Bloody lawyers.

DRISCOLL

I don't have to do this you know!

WYLDE

I thought you said the firm sent you?

DRISCOLL

Yes, well, in a voluntary sense. The leader of the firm, Mr Dunlevy, has always been very strong on the issue of community involvement. He likes us all to do our bit.

WYLDE

You can do your bloody bit til you're blue in the face, you'll still be no better than dog vomit.

DRISCOLL

I don't have to listen to this. I'm leaving.

He picks up his briefcase. Suddenly his mobile phone goes off.

DRISCOLL (CONT)

Hello? No I can't talk now darling... You what?... well how far apart are the contractions?... Look, I'll be there as fast as I can. Okay? Love you...

He folds up his mobile phone and heads for the door.

DRISCOLL (CONT)

(To DOOLAN)

Feel free to forge my signature on the euthanasia form, Father. I won't miss him in the least.

Suddenly the door opens the other way. It's DOCTOR ANGELA SWAIN, an authoritative-looking woman in her 40s.

DR SWAIN

Where do you think you're going?
Aren't you part of the panel?

DRISCOLL

That bloody bastard insulted me!

DR SWAIN

He's a sick man! He's on several different types of medication. Just because he insulted you doesn't give you the right to just walk out.

She leans in closer to DRISCOLL.

DR SWAIN (CONT)

Clyde Driscoll isn't it? Good God. Last time I saw you was at my partner's malpractice suit. Whoever dreamed up this panel had a sense of humour. Come on then, let's get on with it. I've already lost half my lunchbreak.

Reluctantly, DRISCOLL comes back inside. DR SWAIN approaches FATHER DOOLAN. She notices his collar.

DR SWAIN (CONT)

Father? I don't believe we've had the pleasure.

DOOLAN

Father Michael Doolan.

They shake hands.

DR SWAIN

Doctor Angela Swain.

WYLDE

Hallooo.

DR SWAIN

Yes Mr Wylde, we haven't forgotten you. (TO DRISCOLL) We need another chair in here Driscoll. And don't go skulking off.

WYLDE

So you're in charge are you, Doctor?

DR SWAIN

None of us are in charge, Mr Wylde. I am the medical representative. These gentlemen are the other members of the panel. We have all been entrusted to ensure that you make this important decision in a sound mental state.

WYLDE

Yeah, well I'm fine. Do I have to sign something or what?

DR SWAIN

It's a little more complicated than that, Mr Wylde. You see, there are some irregularities in your case which need to be ironed out.

WYLDE

What sort of irregularities?

SWAIN stands.

DR SWAIN

Well, Mr Wylde, you're a virtual mystery as far as the state is concerned. No birth certificate, no tax file number, no superannuation, no bank account... I mean, what have you done with your life?

WYLDE

Look, I want to die, not take out a loan.

DR SWAIN

But you must have had some kind of a job?

WYLDE

I was a taxi driver.

DR SWAIN

Ah, well that explains a lot. Got out in the nick of time did you, just before the laws were clamped down?

WYLDE

I was forced out due to a police matter, if you must know.

DR SWAIN

And did you serve time, Mr Wylde?

WYLDE

They took away my licence. That's what got me into this mess.

DRISCOLL returns without a chair. He steals SWAIN's.

DRISCOLL

The police gave you AIDS then, did they Wylde?

WYLDE

In a manner of speaking.

DR SWAIN

I thought you were going to get another chair?

DRISCOLL

Get your own bloody chair. Anyway, there aren't any.

DOOLAN

Look, I think we're all in agreement that Mr Wylde's past is of no concern of ours. We're here to judge whether the patient is of sound mind to take his own life. I don't think all this squabbling is conducive to the correct atmosphere.

WYLDE

Hear, hear.

DR SWAIN

Yes, well, we're all busy people. Perhaps we should get on with it.

DRISCOLL

Thank Christ for that.

SWAIN glares at him as she starts unpacking something from her bag. She plugs an extension cable into the wall.

DRISCOLL (CONT)

Sorry Father.

SWAIN pulls out a notebook computer and sets it up on her lap. She pulls out a venomous-looking drip and plugs it into the computer. The other end goes into the stand above WYLDE's bed. She plugs the computer into the extension cable.

WYLDE

Is that for my memoirs? Bit late for that isn't it darling?

DR SWAIN

This, Mr Wylde, is the latest thing in euthanasia technology. You simply answer a series of questions and the computer administers sufficient dosage of sodium pentothal to cause death. It's completely painless.

WYLDE

What about the stake?

DR SWAIN

I'm sorry?

WYLDE

I told the nurse before, chemicals aren't any good to me. I want a bloody stake!

DRISCOLL

Tired of hospital mashed potatoes are you Wylde?

WYLDE

Look you bloody fool, I'm not talking about meat. I'm talking about a stake! A pointy wooden stake!

DOOLAN

You mean like, for growing tomatoes?

WYLDE

That's right! I want a bloody stake through my heart!

They're all a bit flabbergasted.

DR SWAIN

Well I must say that's a very irregular request, Mr Wylde.

WYLDE

That's what I want.

DOOLAN

May one ask why, Mr Wylde?

WYLDE

One may ask, why, yes, but one may not like the answer.

DOOLAN

There's no need to be patronising.

DRISCOLL

I'll be off if it's all right with everyone. Important matters at home to attend to.

DR SWAIN

It is not all right, Mr Driscoll!

DRISCOLL

Why not?

DR SWAIN

You've got a duty to this panel and to the laws of this country to stay here until we reach an ordered decision as to Mr Wylde's mental health.

DRISCOLL

But the man's obviously barmy! What else is there for us to discuss?

DR SWAIN

Mr Wylde's sanity has not yet been established.

DRISCOLL

What sane man would want to die with a tomato stake through his gut I ask you? Really, this is ridiculous.

DOOLAN

I think it would help for us to at least know why Mr Wylde has made this... unusual request.

DR SWAIN

Yes, Mr Wylde. You do have a reason
I presume?

WYLDE

I'd really rather not go into it.

DR SWAIN

I'm afraid you have to.

WYLDE

I've got a... condition.

DR SWAIN

What sort of condition?

WYLDE

A very particular sort of condition.

DR SWAIN

Go on.

WYLDE

Well let's put it this way. How old
do you think I am?

DR SWAIN

47.

DOOLAN

53.

DRISCOLL

Who bloody cares?

WYLDE

Next month I'll be two hundred and
thirty six.

DRISCOLL

What's your secret then, Methusalah?
Lots of yoghurt?

DOOLAN

(TO DR SWAIN)

The illness has obviously got to his
head.

WYLDE

The secret isn't yoghurt. It's fresh
blood.

DR SWAIN

I'm sorry?!

WYLDE

B. L. O. O. D. Red stuff that pumps around people's bodies. You should know all about it, being a doctor and all.

DR SWAIN

Of course I know what blood is. But I fail to see what all this has to do with your preposterous comments.

WYLDE

I told you you wouldn't like it.

DRISCOLL

You should be in the loony bin, you crazy bastard, not the AIDS ward.

WYLDE

I've got blood on my hands already, Driscoll, don't tempt me to do anything else I'll regret.

DOOLAN

Is there some crime weighing on your conscience, Mr Wylde? Is that what all this is about?

WYLDE

I've never been one for confessing, Father. But if it will help you people realise I'm perfectly sane, there are one or two stories I could tell.

DR SWAIN

We didn't come here for stories, Mr Wylde. We came here for the truth.

WYLDE

All my stories are true.

DR SWAIN

Even the one about being two hundred years old?

DRISCOLL

236.

WYLDE

It began when I was sent down to the hulks in Portsmouth. Until then I'd been respectable enough. A spot of forgery here and there, but nothing much.

DOOLAN

Portsmouth, England?

WYLDE

That's right.

DRISCOLL

Jesus Christ.

WYLDE

I was sleeping in my bunk when I felt something on my neck. Teeth, sinking into me. I could feel my blood spurting out of my body. And then there was a period when it was very cold and black. During the night, hands lifted up my body, and threw me in the river. I woke with the sun's first rays next morning. I had an intense headache, and shouted out. The guards hauled me back up into the prison ship and beat me as an escapee. After that, I was changed. I began to seek others out as I had been sought out. I became a drinker of blood.

DR SWAIN

Now hold on there, Mr Wylde. When did all this happen?

WYLDE

It was about 1789 I suppose.

DRISCOLL

More like 1959. In fact I think I've seen this movie. Didn't it have Bela Lugosi in it?

DOOLAN

It's certainly a very elaborate delusion you've got there, Mr Wylde.

WYLDE

After that they sent us out to Van Diemen's Land. Tasmania, they call it now.

DR SWAIN

I think we all did history at school, Mr Wylde.

WYLDE

I escaped from the prison with a bunch of men and we went overland. When we ran out of food, we started eating each other. The country was very rough. Eventually there were only two of us left. I finished the other bloke off just as I got within sight of the port at Launceston.

DRISCOLL

Do you really expect us to believe any of this crap, you bloody madman?

DOOLAN

(TO WYLDE)

I think he means, do you have any kind of evidence?

WYLDE

Of course there wasn't any evidence. How do you think I got away with it?

DOOLAN

You got away with it?

WYLDE

I told them, in the port, that I'd been shipwrecked. They gave me free passage to the mainland. I came to Australia a free man.

DRISCOLL

A real opportunity for a fully fledged vampire, I suppose?

WYLDE

There were opportunities, yes. But life was hard.

DRISCOLL

Tell me, how did you manage to stay out of the sun for two centuries?

WYLDE

You've spent too long reading books,
you stupid lawyer.

DRISCOLL

And you, Mr Moron, have spent too
watch time watching late late
movies.

WYLDE

If you learned from life, instead of
books, you'd know that blood
drinkers don't all look like Tom
Cruise and go around lying in
coffins during the day. The sunlight
gives us headaches, that's all.
Makes it hard to think straight.

DRISCOLL

Well I can see that is a problem.

DOOLAN

You said "Us". Are you saying there
are others like you?

WYLDE

Thousands. Millions probably.
Multiplying by the day.

DOOLAN

(TO DR SWAIN)

Have you struck this kind of
delusion before, doctor?

DR SWAIN

I normally deal with fertility
problems, Father. I'm not a
psychiatrist.

WYLDE

If you don't believe me, get a lie
detector in here. Ask me anything.

DRISCOLL

What's your favourite colour.

WYLDE

(darkly)

Red.

DOOLAN

Well what do we do now?

DR SWAIN

How would I know? It's not like there's some kind of guidebook for this sort of thing. It's a new law.

DRISCOLL

I'm sorry, but what is there to discuss? He's not sane, is he? I mean I don't care if he tops himself, but the law says he can't press the button if he doesn't know what he's doing.

DRISCOLL's phone rings. He answers it.

DRISCOLL (CONT)

Yes honey, I know I'm not home yet. I've been caught up, okay? Things have got a little complicated.... Now remember your breathing... Yes, I won't be long... Bye, honey...

DRISCOLL grabs his bag again.

DRISCOLL (CONT)

Well people, it's been wacky, but I've got more important things to do. I'm out of here.

On his way to the door, DRISCOLL trips over the cable for the notebook computer. It goes dead with a spark. SWAIN jumps up and plugs it back in. She looks at the screen in horror.

DR SWAIN

Oh my God, it's started administering the poison automatically.

She bangs at the keys.

DR SWAIN (CONT)

I can't make it stop!

She jumps up and runs over to the drip, but the green fluid is fast disappearing. She yanks it out of WYLDE's arm, but it's too late. The others watch in morbid fascination.

WYLDE flutters his eyes and closes them. DR SWAIN checks his pulse.

DR SWAIN (CONT)
I can't find his pulse!

She considers mouth to mouth, and then thinks better of it.

DR SWAIN (CONT)
What are we going to tell the
hospital?

DRISCOLL
We'll tell them you stuffed up.

DOOLAN
No we won't, we'll tell them that we
decided to let Mr Wylde die in
peace.

DR SWAIN
But he was a raving loonie!

DOOLAN
Well isn't that good? I mean, no one
will miss him.

DR SWAIN
That's the whole point! If he was a
raving loonie then in the eyes of
the law we might as well have
murdered him! We'll be in jail for
years.

DRISCOLL
Maybe this whole thing was a test
case for the new law. They
deliberately gave us a loonie to see
if we could pick him. Pity about the
death machine stuffing up.

DR SWAIN
It wasn't the machine's fault! It
was yours! You tripped over the
cable!

DOOLAN
She's got a point there, Driscoll.
If you hadn't been in such a hurry
to get out of here , then none of
this would have happened.

They all sit there regarding the awful complexities of the
situation. Suddenly WYLDE comes to life with a start. He
sits up and rubs his eyes.

The panel jump out of their skins.

DOOLAN (CONT)

It's a miracle!

DRISCOLL

Well fancy that, the bloody bugger's back.

DR SWAIN

Mr Wylde! You're alive!

WYLDE

Of course I'm bloody alive, no thanks to you lot.

DR SWAIN

But I just squirted 200 mills of sodium pentothal into your bloodstream.

WYLDE

I told you before, chemicals don't work.

DR SWAIN

But that was enough to kill a rhinoceros!

WYLDE

I'm not a rhinoceros, Doctor. I'm a bloodsucking 236 year old vampire.

DRISCOLL thinks fast.

DRISCOLL

Let me get this straight, Wylde. You can die if someone spears you with a stake, but nothing else can kill you. Is that it?

DR SWAIN

I'm sorry, but that's absurd.

DOOLAN

But you saw what happened!

DR SWAIN

I saw it, but I don't believe it.

WYLDE

Let me tell you a story. Not long after I arrived in Sydney, I was taken with the bloodlust. I killed a young sailor and drank his blood. Unfortunately I was seen, and then caught. They sentenced me to death. Back then, a rope was used. They strung me up, and I fell. The rope snapped. They strung me up again. The rope unravelled. The third time the whole gallows fell down. They let me go after that.

DOOLAN

Divine intervention!

WYLDE

That's what they said.

DRISCOLL

What about sickness and disease?

WYLDE

I survived the smallpox epidemic in the 1790s and the bubonic in the 1900s. Spanish Flu, malaria, whooping cough. I shook them all off like sniffles.

DR SWAIN

But you've got AIDS now.

WYLDE

That's right. It's painful and it's annoying. But it's not going to kill me. I need you people for that.

DRISCOLL

This is absolutely fantastic!

The others look at him.

DRISCOLL (CONT)

Think of the money that could be made out of your blood, Wylde. Vaccinations, immunisations... God, it's like liquid gold.

WYLDE

I'm a bloodsucking monstrous parasite, Driscoll.

DRISCOLL

Well, yes, but no one's perfect.

DR SWAIN

Driscoll's right, Mr Wylde. Your constitution could be a marvellous gift to science and medicine.

WYLDE

Look, doctor. I've been on this world long enough. I'm tired of all the pain and the degradation. I'm tired of causing horror and destruction. I don't want to live anymore. I'm sick of it. When I was driving taxis, that was one thing. Those people were scum. But since then...

DR SWAIN

But Mr Wylde, what you're saying is that you're an immortal being. This is a wonderful gift.

WYLDE

It's not a gift. It's a curse!

DOOLAN

I think what we're forgetting here is that Mr Wylde deserves a right to die with dignity. That's why we're all here, after all. Well isn't it?

The others cannot meet his eyes.

DRISCOLL

Seems to me we're looking at a 2 to 1 situation here at the moment, Father. My understanding of the legislation is that death requires a majority decision.

DR SWAIN

That's right.

There is a pause.

WYLDE

Doctor Swain, isn't it?

DR SWAIN

That's right.

WYLDE

Tell me Doctor, Did you ever know a man called Jeffrey Swain?

DR SWAIN

Yes. Yes, he was my brother. What do you know about that?

WYLDE

Well, like I told you before, I've been a taxi driver most of the time I've been in Australia. Hansom cabs in the old days. Then the Model Ts. FJ's. Ford Falcons. Always working night shifts. It's a good job if you have to stay out of the sun. Oh I worked hard all right. Never missed a shift.

DR SWAIN

Get to the point.

WYLDE

Well I've never been a drinking man, doctor, but it might interest you to know that I lost my taxi licence a few years ago for DUI. Driving under the influence, they call it. That night I'd picked up a bunch of football hooligans from a pub. They were in a fine state when I got them. Vomiting all over each other, pissing out the window. One by one, I dropped them home. The last one was so comatose he could barely open his eyes. He wasn't conscious enough to tell me where he lived, so I just drove around the city waiting for him to wake up. I tried to take him to the hospital but they wouldn't have him. Round and round the city we went. Anyway, it was getting close to dawn, and I was feeling a bit peckish. The fella still hadn't woken up. I drove way out west, past the suburbs. I parked the car, walked around for a bit, and then I couldn't stand it any more. I plunged my teeth into his neck up to the gums, drank my fill, pulled him out of the car and left him there.

WYLDE (CONT)

Just a few k's up the road, the police pulled me over. I thought they had me for sure this time. But it turned out it was a random breath testing check. Although I hadn't touched a drop for 153 years they said I was well over the limit. The thing was see, that fella musta had so much alcohol in his blood that he pushed me over the limit all on his own! Bit ironic really. Fella gets blind drunk with his mates and another bloke cops the charge. I saw his name in the paper later. Jeffrey Swain. Jeffrey liked a drink did he?

DR SWAIN

You bloody bastard!

She falls on him with an animal cry and starts punching him to a pulp. DOOLAN and DRISCOLL pull her off, with difficulty.

DRISCOLL

Hey, that's my investment you're damaging!

DR SWAIN

He's not an investment, he's a bloody murderer!

DOOLAN

Still, he confessed what he did, didn't he? Didn't make no bones about it?

WYLDE

Here's your big chance, Swain. There's a hardware store across the street. Get a wooden stake and come back in here and do me! Quick now, while you're angry.

DR SWAIN

I might just do that!

She slams him with her handbag and storms out the door.

DRISCOLL

You're not going to aid and abet
this are you Doolan? You? A man of
the cloth?

DOOLAN

Well, I don't know.

DRISCOLL

What do you mean you don't know!
Unless we do something, she's gonna
come back in here in a minute and
coldbloodedly murder a helpless man!

DOOLAN

But he wants to die. Isn't that
right, Mr Wylde?

WYLDE

That's right, Father. Don't you
listen to the lawyer. All he cares
about is money.

DRISCOLL

I am sick and tired of these shallow
accusations of self interest,
especially from you of all people.

WYLDE

What do you mean?

DRISCOLL

Well here you are, by your own
admission a filthy murdering
criminal, being offered a chance to
put something back into the
community, and all you can do is
scoff and deride the man who's
offering to make it happen.

DRISCOLL's phone rings again.

WYLDE

I don't believe this.

DRISCOLL

Yes I know it's late honey... Yes I
know I said I'd come... Two ticks,
okay... Hang on, you're breaking
up... Don't hang up... I'm going
outside.

He goes out into the corridor.

DOOLAN starts pacing up and down anxiously. He fiddles with his papers, running the edge up and down his palm as he walks.

WYLDE

I know you're nervous, Father, but there's no ethical dilemma here, really there isn't. When she comes back, you can look the other way if you like. She's a strong woman. Tell them she overpowered you.

DOOLAN

Is it true... what you said about the diseases?

WYLDE

What do you mean?

DOOLAN

Well, you know, about how they can't kill you.

WYLDE

God's truth, Father. Nothing can kill me but a stake through the heart.

There is a pause. DOOLAN fiddles with his papers nervously. Suddenly, WYLDE sniffs at something.

WYLDE (CONT)

Cut yourself, Father?

DOOLAN

What do you-

Then he notices blood on his hand from a paper cut.

DOOLAN

Oh! Look at that. I must have cut myself with the paper somehow.

WYLDE

Let me look at that.

DOOLAN shows him the cut. WYLDE sniffs at it like a person with nicotine withdrawal sniffing smoke.

WYLDE (CONT)

Mmmm. Nasty. Amazing what you can do with a piece of paper if you're not careful.

Doolan mops up the blood with a tissue.

WYLDE (CONT)

You know, after they took away my taxi licence, it was hard to find good, honest, anonymous victims. Not many people walk around after dark these days. So much easier when they come to you.

DOOLAN

I can imagine.

WYLDE

Eventually I had to resort to hanging around street corners and brothels. But the women got to know me. It was too dangerous. So I had to look elsewhere. I found a wall - not far from here - where boys from the country came when they didn't have any money. Do you know it?

DOOLAN

(laughs nervously)

Not really my scene.

WYLDE

One day, I attacked a boy there whose blood tasted... funny.

DOOLAN

Funny?

WYLDE

Not quite right. But it had been a while between drinks, so to speak, so I went right ahead. It wasn't long after that when the ... symptoms started.

DOOLAN is really on edge now.

WYLDE (CONT)

Funny thing is, that boy's blood smelled just like yours. Have you had HIV long, Father?

DOOLAN

I found out six months ago.

WYLDE

Like I said, it's a funny old virus, plays games with you. Makes you feel fine one minute, and like death warmed up the next. I suppose you think that if you play along with Driscoll you might be one of the millions to take advantage of my unusual blood chemistry.

DOOLAN

The thought had crossed my mind..

WYLDE

But think of the suffering, Father. Think of the pain. All of those people, becoming vampires, just so that they don't die of good honest illnesses and old age.

DOOLAN

I suppose you're right. It's selfish isn't it?

WYLDE

There is another way, you know.

DOOLAN

There is?

WYLDE

Harold Holt, John Kerr, that bloke who reads the news. Being blood drinkers didn't do their careers any harm. Got to be careful where you go on holidays of course. One time I went to Ayers Rock and it nearly brought the whole show down.

DOOLAN

What do you mean?

WYLDE

I mean that it wasn't a dingo, if you know what I mean.

DOOLAN

It wasn't?

WYLDE

'Fraid not. See the urges come over you at the most inconvenient times. But being a priest and all, I guess you'd know all about urges and things. How to control them I mean.

DOOLAN

What are you suggesting?

WYLDE

Join the club.

DOOLAN

Become a vampire?

WYLDE

If you want to be crude about it.

DOOLAN

What's the catch?

WYLDE

You've got to kill me first.

DOOLAN

But how?

WYLDE

See that broom over there?

DOOLAN

Yes.

WYLDE

Snap it over your knee and bring it over here.

Doolan hesitates.

WYLDE (CONT)

Don't think about it, Doolan. Join the me generation. Just do it.

Doolan grabs the broom and snaps it over his knee.

DOOLAN

I really don't know about this, Mr Wylde. I'm sure it violates several commandments.

WYLDE

Do you want to die, Father?

DOOLAN shakes his head.

WYLDE (CONT)

Well I do. And you're dying right now. Without my help, nothing can save you. Can't you see it makes sense? Quick, man, before that bloody lawyer comes back. Come in close beside me. Get your stake ready.

DOOLAN

I really don't know about this Mr Wylde. I think I'd rather let nature run its course, if it's all the s-

WYLDE lunges out of bed and bites DOOLAN on the neck. DOOLAN struggles and flails at him with the wooden stick. WYLDE becomes stronger as he tastes the blood. For the first time he uses his arms and legs. DOOLAN screams and moans, stabbing ineffectively at WYLDE with the broom handle.

Suddenly DRISCOLL runs back in. He tries to pull WYLDE off. Then SWAIN comes in with her stake held high.

DR SWAIN

Get out of the way!

She plunges the stake into WYLDE's chest. He releases his grip on DOOLAN. DOOLAN falls to the floor, unconscious.

WYLDE groans and twists like an animal on a spit. His face grimaces and distorts itself into a smile.

WYLDE

Thank... you...

He falls to the ground, dead. Swain pants for breath.

DRISCOLL

You stupid, stupid woman. Look what you've done!

DR SWAIN

But that monster was going to kill the Father.

She checks Doolan's pulse.

DR SWAIN

He did kill him!

DRISCOLL

You're gonna see me in court, you bloody incompetent fool. I've been on the phone lining up meetings halfway into next month on the strength of this guy. He was worth millions, billions. You've ruined me!

DR SWAIN

He was a vampire!

DRISCOLL doesn't listen.

DRISCOLL

Hang on, what about his blood? They can do stuff with DNA now can't they? Maybe there's still hope? Where's the freezer. Has this hospital got a freezer?

SWAIN looks at DRISCOLL in amazement.

Meanwhile, DOOLAN has started coming back to life. The others don't notice as he shakes himself and looks around with a strange smile. He opens his mouth to reveal vampire teeth. He stands and advances on DRISCOLL.

DRISCOLL (CONT)

If we froze the guy maybe they could match his DNA and make a model of his blood. You know, like that movie, what was it called-

DRISCOLL is cut off with a hideous scream as DOOLAN falls on his throat. He drains DRISCOLL and drops him.

Swain backs across the room.

DR SWAIN

Father, Father? What's- Aaaaagh!

DOOLAN sucks her blood and drops her lifeless body to the floor. He looks around for more victims. His eyes fix on the camera. Arms raised, he moves towards the lens with a crazed, bloodstained grin.

Black.