

The Sonnets To Orpheus

By

Howard A. Landman

based on "The Sonnets To Orpheus" by Rainer Maria Rilke

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ACT I

EXT. MUZOT - WINTER DAY - ESTABLISHING

Snow covers the ground. The wind blows some around.

INT. MUZOT, WRITING ROOM - DAY

RAINER MARIA RILKE sits in a CHAIR at his DESK, not moving, just staring (seen from behind).

Closeup, Rilke's face from the side, still staring.

A blank PAD OF PAPER. Rilke's hand next to it, holding a PEN, not moving.

Rilke's face from below (the viewpoint of the paper), still staring. After a moment he takes a breath, sighs, shakes his head, and starts to move.

(from behind again) Rilke gets up and leaves the desk.

INT. MUZOT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Rilke sits in a comfortable ARMCHAIR with ENDTABLE and LAMP, reading OVID'S METAMORPHOSES.

RILKE'S LOVER sits in another armchair, looking at the fire burning in the fireplace. She turns to look at him.

LOVER

What are you reading?

RILKE

Ovid. Metamorphoses.

LOVER

(amused)

Why an old Greek? Aren't you the most modern of modern poets?

RILKE

(closing book)

Something about these stories is timeless. They were written a thousand years ago, yet people still read them. They still have meaning. They still ... inspire.

(CONTINUED)

LOVER

Why do you think that is?

Rilke stares at the fire.

The fire burns merrily.

RILKE

I suppose because they're all about transformation and change, and those are eternal. Everything changes and fades and passes, and everyone experiences that and, eventually, has to come to terms with it.

Lover looks at Rilke quizzically.

RILKE

I mean, look, your beauty, moment by moment it evaporates, rises off your face like the steam off a hot dish. We're all perishable, and we all perish. That's our essence. That's what we are. So the stories have enduring value because they help us to know that.

LOVER

So is that all there is? What happens ... after?

RILKE

Who knows? In religion, in these myths, there's an afterlife, an underworld, a realm of the dead. But no one alive can go there, no one dead can come back.

LOVER

No one?

RILKE

No mere mortal. Maybe a demigod, like Orpheus. His wife died on their wedding day, so he went to Hades to bring her back, and almost succeeded.

LOVER

What about him was so special? Why was he able to do that?

(CONTINUED)

RILKE

He had a kind of dual nature. As the demigod of music, he was a priest of both Apollo and Dionysus. Apollo was the god of light and reason, and music needs that because it has a mathematical structure. Dionysus was the god of drunkenness and orgies, of wine women and song, and music has that side too. So he was a bridge between two realms: light and darkness, reason and passion, life and death.

LOVER

It's that letter about the Knoop's daughter Wera, isn't it? Is that why you've been thinking about death so much lately?

RILKE

Yes. It just doesn't seem right. She was so young, and a brilliant dancer, and then she was just gone. Some rare disease of the blood. And no one's going to remember her.

LOVER

You remember her, don't you?

RILKE

Yes, for now. But someday I'll die too.

INT. MUZOT, WRITING ROOM - DAY

Rilke sits at his desk, not moving, just staring (seen from behind).

A blank pad of paper. Rilke's hand next to it, holding a pen, not moving.

Closeup, Rilke's face from the side, still staring. He grimaces in frustration. Suddenly Lover's head enters the screen and kisses him.

LOVER

Still no luck with the elegies?

(CONTINUED)

RILKE

I can't find any inspiration.

LOVER

(laughs)

Why don't you stop looking for it  
in yourself, and try looking for it  
in him?

She pins up a POSTCARD with a picture of Orpheus sitting under a tree, playing his lyre, with many animals sitting quietly in a circle around him, listening. She kisses Rilke's head with her hand on his shoulder, then leaves.

Rilke stares at the postcard.

The postcard.

Orpheus in the postcard.

Rilke's face lights up. He writes furiously for a few moments, then stops.

TITLE: The Sonnets To Orpheus

TITLE: written as a grave monument for Wera Ouckama Knoop

TITLE: Part I

TITLE: 1

INT. TREE

Rilke sits in a comfortable ARMCHAIR, next to him is a small table with a LAMP, a BOOK, and a small VASE holding a single ROSE. (The same props as in living room.) A pool of light covers them all, but the rest is darkness.

Rilke stands.

RILKE

A tree ascended there. Oh pure  
transcendence!

Another light shines on a curtain painted as a tree, which is rising through the light.

RILKE (O.S.)

Oh Orpheus sings! Oh tall tree in  
the ear!

More light reveals ORPHEUS sitting at the base of the tree, playing his LYRE and singing (without sound).

(CONTINUED)

RILKE (O.S.)

And all grew hushed. But in that  
very silence a new beginning, sign  
and change appeared.

Several dancers dressed as various animals (ANIMAL #1, ANIMAL #2, ANIMAL #3) emerge from the darkness slowly and quietly, sneakily, almost crawling. They form a crouched semicircle around Orpheus and listen attentively.

RILKE (O.S.)

Quiet creatures gathered from the  
clear unhurried forest, out of lair  
and nest; and so it must have been,  
their stealthiness was not born out  
of cunning or of fear, but just  
from hearing. Bellow, cry, and roar  
seemed tiny in their hearts. And  
where before there barely stood a  
hut to take this in, a hiding place  
of deepest darkest yens, and with  
an entryway whose doorposts  
trembled - you built for them an  
auditory temple.

MAID enters, leaping out from behind Orpheus. She wears a flesh-colored leotard so as to appear nearly naked, and is partly wrapped in and partly trailing transparent light green veils. The light on Orpheus and animals fades to black, leaving only Maid illuminated.

TITLE: 2

INT. EAR

Maid dances joyously with her veils.

RILKE (O.S.)

She was a maid almost, emerging  
here from this united joy of song  
and lyre and shone clear through  
her vernal veils like fire and made  
herself a bed inside my ear.

Maid curls up in front of a large image of an ear and goes to sleep.

RILKE (O.S.)

And slept in me. And all was in her  
sleep.

Images of trees, a meadow, and other beautiful natural settings appear dreamily around Maid and ear.

(CONTINUED)

RILKE (O.S.)

The trees, which I always admired,  
such palpable distance, the meadow  
felt so much and every wonder, that  
affected me. She slept the world.

Maid slowly stands up, eyes closed as if sleepwalking.  
Images continue to appear. Rilke watches her from nearby.

RILKE

Oh singing god, how did you so  
complete her, that she did not care  
to wake up first? Look, she stood  
and dreamed.

Maid slowly walks off and down into the darkness, away from  
Rilke.

RILKE

Where is her death? Will you invent  
this theme before your song  
consumes itself? To where sinks she  
away from me? ... Almost a maid ...

TITLE: 3

INT. LYRE DOOR

Rilke sees Orpheus walking towards a doorway in the shape of  
his lyre. There are "strings" barring the way, but Orpheus  
passes through easily. Rilke attempts to follow but is  
blocked by the strings.

RILKE

A god can do it. How do you expect  
a man to squeeze on through the  
lyre and follow?

INT. STAGE

Rilke turns and sees BOYFRIEND and GIRLFRIEND, dancing  
around each other

RILKE

His mind is torn. Where heartways  
intersect, you won't find any  
temple to Apollo.

Boyfriend and Girlfriend continue to dance, oblivious to  
Rilke. Boyfriend kneels and sings his love (silently) to  
girlfriend.

(CONTINUED)

RILKE

True singing, as you teach it,  
isn't wanting, not wooing anything  
that can be won; no, Singing's  
Being. For the god, not daunting.  
But when are we? And when will he  
then turn into our being all the  
Earth and Stars?

Rilke touches Boyfriend, who rises and faces him, as if they  
are having a father-to-son chat.

RILKE

It isn't that you love, child, even  
if the voice exploded from your  
mouth - begin forgetting, that you  
sang. That disappears.

A wind slowly picks up until it is strong enough to ruffle  
their hair and clothes. They all turn to face into it.

RILKE

To sing in truth is quite a  
different breath. A breath of void.  
A gust in the god. A wind.

TITLE: 4

INT. STAGE

Boyfriend and Girlfriend continue facing into the  
wind. They walk into it, away from Rilke.

RILKE

Oh you tender ones, step now and  
then into the breath, that knows  
not of you, upon your cheeks let it  
split in two, behind you it  
quivers, united again.

Boyfriend and Girlfriend face each other at a distance and  
each mimic drawing a bow and firing an arrow into the  
other's heart. They clutch at their hearts and spin until  
they collapse against each other, back to back.

RILKE (O.S.)

Oh you blessed ones, oh you whole,  
in whom the beginning of hearts  
appears. Bows for arrows and  
arrows' goal, your smile is always  
stained with tears.

(CONTINUED)

They put their arms up like caryatids and mime being pressed downward as if by an invisible weight. Slowly they are crushed to the ground, resisting the whole way.

RILKE (O.S.)

Don't be afraid the weight will  
oppress, give it back to the  
Earth's heaviness; heavy are the  
mountains, heavy are the seas. The  
trees that you planted as children,  
these have long been too heavy for  
you to bear.

Suddenly they spring up as if flinging off the burden, and zoom off into the darkness.

RILKE (O.S.)

But space ... but the air ...

TITLE: 5

INT. ROSE BUSH

Rilke stands by a ROSE BUSH with profuse blossoms.

RILKE

Erect no monument. Just let the  
roses blossom every year as his  
reward. For that is Orpheus. His  
metamorphoses to this and that. We  
shouldn't strive too hard

Rilke stands and walks. He pauses by a BOWL OF ROSES. Then he moves on and ends up at the LYRE DOOR

RILKE

to find another name. Once and for  
all, it's Orpheus if there's song.  
He comes and goes. Isn't it enough  
that sometimes he'll survive a few  
days longer than the rose? And  
though he also worries at his  
passing, he has to fade, for you to  
understand! For when his word  
expands beyond existence,

INT. LYRE DOOR

Rilke approaches the lyre-door. We look through the bars to see Orpheus walking away.

RILKE  
 he is already, where you can't go  
 with him. The lyre's bars do not  
 constrain his hands. And he obeys  
 the best, when he's trespassing.

We see Rilke from the inside of the LYRE DOOR, his hands on the "bars" that prevent him from following.

TITLE: 6

INT. DOOR OF THE DEAD

Orpheus approaches the door of the dead, which is dark inside and surrounded by tree roots.

RILKE (O.S.)  
 Is he a local? No, his extended  
 nature grows from both domains. The  
 willow's twig he skillfully bends,  
 who knowledge of the roots has  
 gained.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Rilke stands by a kitchen table with an old-fashioned BOTTLE OF MILK, a PITCHER of water, a CUTTING BOARD, BREAD, and a KNIFE. DEAD #1 and DEAD #2 approach the table, crawling, and reach for the food.

RILKE  
 When you go to bed, don't leave on  
 the table bread or milk; these  
 attract the dead. But he, who  
 conjures them up, is able under his  
 eyes' forgiving lids

INT. DOOR OF THE DEAD

Orpheus enters the door of the dead.

RILKE (O.S.)  
 to blend their visage with all  
 happenings; and the magic of  
 fumaria and rue is as real to him  
 as the clearest issue.

## INT. SARCOPHAGUS

Orpheus approaches a sarcophagus. Behind it, in separate pools of light, are a BRACELET, the same pitcher as in the kitchen, and a RING. He kneels down before them in awe. In the background, DEAD #1, DEAD #2, and LAMENT wait expectantly.

RILKE (O.S.)

His bona fide vision, nothing can  
debase; be it from rooms, be it  
from graves, he praises bracelet,  
pitcher and ring.

TITLE: 7

## EXT. VINEYARD - DAY

Rilke walks by a wine press. Juice gushes out of it.

RILKE

Praise, that's it! One called to  
profess praise, he emerged like ore  
from the stone's silence. His  
heart, oh ephemeral press that  
yields unto men unending wines.

Rilke continues walking into the vineyard proper past grapevines. Grapes ripen in the sun.

RILKE

When he is gripped by that god-like  
standard, not even dust can choke  
his mouth. All becomes grapes, all  
becomes vineyard, ripened in his  
sensuous south.

## INT. SARCOPHAGUS

Orpheus leaves the sarcophagus area, heading back out. The dead and Lament close in as if following.

RILKE (O.S.)

Even mould in the crypts of kings  
can't give the lie to his  
praisings, nor that from the gods a  
shadow falls.

## INT. DOOR OF THE DEAD

Outside the door of the dead, Orpheus holds a bowl of luscious fruit out towards the door. The arms of the dead reach out from inside the door to grab fruit.

RILKE (O.S.)

He's the lone enduring messenger  
who reaches deep into death's door  
offering glorious fruit in bowls.

TITLE: 8

## INT. ROCK AND ALTAR

LAMENT enters, walking slowly and precisely to the rock. Faint sound of THUNDER. A few drops begin falling on the rock, and slowly build to a downpour. The rain falls only on the rock, not on Lament or the surroundings.

RILKE (O.S.)

Only in praise-space may Lament  
pass freely, nymph of the spring of  
tears, watching over our  
cloudburst's torrent, that on the  
rock our rains run clear,

Lament watches the rain fall without emotion. She looks down into her cupped hands and we see she is still carrying the piece of fruit that she got from Orpheus.

RILKE (O.S.)

that rock which bears the gate and  
altar. - See, on her calm shoulders  
fruits the feeling she's the  
youngest sister in the sisterhood  
of moods.

## INT. TABLE

Lament sits at a TABLE counting a pile of small sharp "pain objects" (e.g. razor blade, thumb tack, piece of broken glass). She picks each one up slowly, turns it over a few times while examining it, and then does something with it off-screen. They sparkle as they turn.

RILKE (O.S.)

Rejoicing knows, and Longing has  
allowed, - Lament alone still  
learns; she all night long counts  
with dainty hands the ancient  
hurts.

(CONTINUED)

Lament suddenly stands up, cupping something in her hands, and awkwardly climbs onto the table. The "ceiling" is now a night sky with stars. Teetering on the tabletop, Lament holds up a necklace of pain objects, which sparkle like stars.

RILKE (O.S.)

But suddenly she, off-balance,  
unrehearsed, holds up a  
constellation of our song in the  
heavens, which her breath does not  
becloud.

TITLE: 9

INT. HADES

Orpheus sits with his Lyre surrounded by several Dead. He raises the lyre and begins playing. The Dead eat POPPY PETALS.

RILKE (O.S.)

Only one who raised the lyre among  
shades, may wisely repay the  
endless praise.

The Dead offer poppy petals to Orpheus, who eats them too.

RILKE (O.S.)

Only one who ate poppies with the  
dead, will never forget the  
faintest note.

INT. HADES, POND

Orpheus kneels over a pond and looks at his own reflection. In the reflection we see dead join him. The surface of the pond is disturbed by wind and the image breaks up.

RILKE (O.S.)

Though the reflection in the pond  
may often waver: Know it  
still. Once in the dual land all  
voices will be hushed forever.

TITLE: 10

## EXT. ROMAN SARCOPHAGI - DAY

Rilke stands gazing at broken sarcophagi with water running through them with heartfelt admiration.

RILKE

You, who never leave my heart for long, I salute you, antique sarcophagi, whom the carefree water of Roman times flows through like a meandering song.

## EXT. FRENCH SARCOPHAGI - DAY

RILKE

Or you as open as the eyes of a shepherd, awakened and cheerful, - inside full of stillness and nettle - abuzz with rapturous butterflies;

RILKE

all you, who are spared any doubt, I salute you, the reopened mouths who already knew silence's name.

RILKE

Do we know it, friends, or do we not? The indecisive hour builds both into the countenance of men.

TITLE: 11

## EXT. HEAVENS - NIGHT

Night sky including Ursa Major (Big Dipper) and Polaris. Close up of Big Dipper. Extreme close up of "handle" of Big Dipper. Even closer view of middle star of handle and its faint companion (the "horse and rider").

RILKE (O.S.)

Look in the heavens. Is no constellation called "Rider"? Then strange we get that impression: this pride from Earth. And by his side's a second he spurs and reins in and rides.

EXT. HILLS (STOCK FOOTAGE?) - DAY

A Cowboy lassos and calms a horse.

RILKE (O.S.)  
 Isn't this, hunted and then  
 subdued, life's sinewy nature?

EXT. TRAIL (STOCK FOOTAGE?) - DAY

Cowboy rides the horse down a trail. He gives the horse a slight signal and it turns.

RILKE (O.S.)  
 Trail and turn. Yet just a nudge is  
 understood.

EXT. PRAIRIE (STOCK FOOTAGE?) - DAY

They ride off into open spaces.

RILKE (O.S.)  
 New expanses. The two are one.

EXT. PASTURE (STOCK FOOTAGE?) - LATE AFTERNOON

Cowboy puts horse out to pasture in a grassy field.

RILKE (O.S.)  
 But are they? Or don't both pursue  
 the path they take together?

INT. TAVERN (STOCK FOOTAGE?)

Cowboy eating a hearty meal at a table.

RILKE (O.S.)  
 Soon, they must part ways for table  
 and turf.

EXT. HEAVENS - NIGHT

The night sky with stars. Slowly, constellation markings are superimposed on the actual stars.

RILKE (O.S.)  
 Stellar connections can deceive.  
 Still, it delights us to believe  
 the figure for awhile. It's enough.

TITLE: 12

INT. ARCHITECT'S OFFICE - DAY

ARCHITECT sits at a DRAFTING TABLE drawing long straight lines with a floating T-square. In the background there is a large clock.

RILKE (O.S.)

Hail to the spirit, with power that  
connects; for we live in figures.

The clock, with second hand ticking. Close up of second hand.

RILKE (O.S.)

And with tiny steps the hours go  
by, keeping pace alongside our  
actual days.

INT. STAGE

Rilke wanders bemusedly through a group of dancers wearing blindfolds, who grope around blindly with their hands in front of them. Occasionally they make contact. At first, they rebound, but eventually they begin linking hands and form a crowded circle.

RILKE

In the absence of knowing our true  
location, we deal instead with  
interrelation. The antennae feel  
the antennae, and the empty  
distances carry ...

Dead approach the cluster from the outside. The dancers pulse outward into a taut circle, leaning back against the tension of their arms. The pulse drives the dead away, but they approach again, as the circle shrinks back into a cluster. A second pulse drives the dead away for good.

RILKE (O.S.)

Pure tension. Oh music of forces at  
play! From you, is not, through  
casual commerce, every disturbance  
deflected away?

EXT. FARM - DAY

Scenes of farm activities.

RILKE (V.O.)

Even the farmer who works and lives  
where seeds transform themselves to  
summers never does enough.

INT. TABLE WITH FRUIT

Rilke stands behind a table laden with a cornucopia of  
produce. He gestures expansively at the vegetables and  
fruit and grain.

RILKE

The Earth just gives.

TITLE: 13

INT. TABLE WITH FRUIT

The Bowl of Fruit sits on a table. Rilke admires the  
fruit. A CHILD comes and tastes the fruit, we see joy and  
astonishment on its face.

RILKE

Plump apple, pear, gooseberry,  
sleek banana ... All of these speak  
death and life in the mouth ... I  
surmise ... read it in the child's  
eyes, who tastes them. This is from  
far away indeed. Do they grow  
slowly nameless in the mouth? In  
place of words, discoveries flow  
out of fruit-flesh, astonishingly  
freed.

Rilke picks up an apple and contemplates it. He thrusts it  
at the camera.

RILKE

Say what you call apple: dare.

Child eats the apple, juice dripping down its chin. Face  
shows a sequences of emotions.

RILKE

Sweet juices arise so readily there  
in the tasting, at first intense,  
to become clear, awake,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RILKE (cont'd)  
transparent, suggestive, sunny,  
earthy, present: - Oh experience,  
feeling, joy, - immense!

TITLE: 14

INT. TABLE WITH FRUIT

Rilke stands in front of the table with fruit bowl,  
lecturing at the camera. Meanwhile, several dead slither  
towards the table and reach for the fruit. They each grab a  
piece.

RILKE  
We share the cycle of flower,  
grapeleaf, fruit. They don't speak  
just the language of the seasons.  
From darkness grows a gaudy  
revelation which is perhaps the  
object of some mute envy from the  
dead, who strengthen the soil. Can  
we conceive how they regard their  
part in this? It long has been  
their way to lard the loam through  
with their marrow.

The dead crawl over to Rilke and slowly press the fruit  
upward, offering it to him humbly and timidly.

RILKE  
But this toil: the question seems  
to be, whether this is done freely.  
Does this, heavy work of slaves,  
ensphered press up to us, their  
lords, as fruit?

They reverse positions: Rilke kneels, while the dead slowly  
rise and stand menacingly over him. They again offer him  
the fruit, but this time superciliously and with  
disdain. He takes an orange from the center one.

RILKE  
Or are they the lords, who sleep  
beside the roots, and grant us out  
of their affluent graves this thing  
halfway between brute force and  
kisses?

TITLE: 15

INT. TABLE WITH FRUIT

The dead rush off and several MAIDENS rush on. A rustic BAND strikes up a simple medieval dance tune (Trotto).

RILKE

Wait ... that taste ... it's  
already flown. ... just a little  
music, a stamping, a drone: You  
warm maidens, you silent maidens,  
dance the taste of fruit we  
experience!

Maidens begin a circular dance with orange veils on the outside and metallic or iridescent orange on the inside.

RILKE (O.S.)

Dance the orange. Who can forget  
it? How, drowning in itself, it  
struggles to deny its sweetness.  
You possess it. It preciously  
converts itself to you. Dance the  
orange. The warmer season weave  
around you, so it ripely shines in  
the air of its homeland! Radiant,  
reveal fragrance after fragrance!  
Create the liaison between the  
pure, forbidding rind, and the  
juice, with which this happy fruit  
is filled!

TITLE: 16

INT. BEDROOM

DOG is laying on bed. Rilke sits next to the bed and speaks to it.

RILKE

You, my friend, are alone, because  
... With words and pointing  
fingers, we lay claim to the world,  
gradually, even its shakiest,  
riskiest parts.

Dog and Rilke suddenly turn to look at the door. Through the door, a couple of dead can be seen moving about.

RILKE

Who can point their finger at a  
smell? But of the powers that give  
us dread, you feel many ... You

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RILKE (cont'd)  
 know the dead, and are frightened  
 of the magic spell.

Rilke and dog turn back to each other and Rilke continues talking.

RILKE  
 Look, now we together must endure  
 bits and pieces, like they were the  
 whole. It's hard to help you.  
 Please don't, above all, plant me  
 in your heart. I grow too quick.

Rilke looks up to see Orpheus. Orpheus has his eyes closed. Rilke takes Orpheus' hand and places it on dog.

RILKE  
 But I'll guide my lord's hand and  
 speak: Here. This is Esau in his  
 fur.

TITLE: 17

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

A single long upwards pan, with parts of a tree in the foreground always. We see a tangle mass of roots, move up past a spring bubbling water, to a field where men in partial armor with helmets are fighting angrily.

RILKE (V.O.)  
 At bottom the ancient, gnarled,  
 root of all things upraised, hidden  
 springs, that are not  
 revealed. Hunt-horn and battle  
 helm,

On the "sidelines", gray-haired old men argue with each other. Shapely women look on with concern or shout encouragement.

RILKE (V.O.)  
 elder's disputes, angry men,  
 overwhelmed, women like lutes ...

We continue to pan up the tree, with the battle raging in the background. We see bare feet climbing the tree branches as we rise.

(CONTINUED)

RILKE (V.O.)  
Crowded twigs on a tree, not one of  
them free ... One! Oh climb higher  
... oh higher ...

A young boy dressed as Orpheus sits in the tree top holding  
his lyre.

RILKE (V.O.)  
Most still break. But instead,  
this first one, overhead, bends  
itself into a lyre.

TITLE: 18

INT. FACTORY - DAY (STOCK FOOTAGE?)

We see and hear large machines operating, pistons pumping,  
wheels turning, steam jetting. Rilke's voice shouts to be  
heard over the noise.

RILKE (V.O.)  
Lord, hear the new rumbling and  
ringing? Heralds come through, its  
praises singing. No hearing's much  
good in the clanking stampede, but  
still every cog would recite you  
its creed. See the machines: how  
they clash and careen, how they  
mangle and unnerve us. If our  
power they have, then at least,  
without passion, they bustle and  
serve us.

TITLE: 19

EXT. SKY - DAY (STOCK FOOTAGE?)

Time-lapse images of clouds shifting and changing.

RILKE (V.O.)  
Though the world changes form quick  
as a cloud does, all things  
completed come back to the  
oldest. Over tumult and change,  
soaring wider and higher, your  
prelude's enduring, god with the  
lyre.

INT. TABLE

Reprise of Lament contemplating pain objects.

RILKE (V.O.)  
Pain, we don't understand,

INT. STAGE

Reprise of Boyfriend and Girlfriend "shooting" each other.

RILKE (V.O.)  
love, don't appreciate,

INT. SARCOPHAGUS

Reprise of Orpheus and the dead.

RILKE (V.O.)  
and what Death has veiled, is never  
revealed. Only songs o'er the land  
rejoice and consecrate.

TITLE: 20

INT. MUZOT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Rilke sits in his armchair. Orpheus stands in front of him,  
waiting.

RILKE  
But oh, what can I consecrate, say,  
to you, lord, who taught the  
creatures hearing? My reminiscence  
of one spring day, at dusk, in  
Russia - a horse appearing ...

Fade to:

EXT. PASTURE - DUSK

A peasant leads an off-white stallion onto the meadow. The  
horse has a hobble on one foreleg. When left alone, the  
horse rears and struggles, rebelling against the hobble, its  
mane whipping about wildly.

RILKE (V.O.)  
From the village it came,  
mushroom-white, his fore leg  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RILKE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
 hobbled, tripping, to be alone on  
 the meadow for the night; the curls  
 of his mane whipping against his  
 neck in exuberant time with the  
 clumsy inhibited gait. How the  
 fountains of equine blood  
 climbed! He felt the vastness, and  
 if! He sang and heard - the cycle  
 of your myth was held in him.

INT. MUZOT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Rilke kneels before Orpheus and bows his head.

RILKE  
 His image I consecrate.

TITLE: 21

EXT. FIELD WITH FLOWERS - SPRING DAY

Rilke walks among varied and profuse flowers.

RILKE  
 Spring has come back. And the Earth  
 is like a child who memorized many  
 poems, so many! ... For this long  
 hard study, she wins the prize.

EXT. FIELD - WINTER DAY

The same field, covered with snow in winter.

RILKE (V.O.)  
 Her teacher was tough. We liked the  
 white hue of the beard below the  
 old man's nose.

EXT. FIELD WITH FLOWERS - SPRING DAY

Back to the flowers.

RILKE  
 Now, we can quiz her what the blue  
 and green are called: she knows,  
 she knows!

Children run in, playing, perhaps some flying kites. We see  
 the joy on their faces.

(CONTINUED)

RILKE

You lucky earth, from duty freed,  
play with the children. We want to  
hold on to you, jolly earth. The  
jolliest succeed.

RILKE

What teacher taught her, all those  
things, and what stands written in  
roots and long entangled stems: she  
sings, she sings!

TITLE: 22

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Time lapse of car headlights and taillights rushing around.

RILKE (V.O.)

We are the drivers. But time's slow  
pace counts us recent arrivers in  
what always stays.

INT. STAGE

Time lapse of dancers rushing around Rilke while he  
lip-syncs speaking ("Jittlov technique").

RILKE

All that hurries will be over in a  
burst; unless what tarries blesses  
us first.

Rilke walks to his armchair while dancers continue to scurry  
around him at impossible speeds.

RILKE

Your courage, don't waste on a  
search for flight, or a quest to be  
quick.

The dancers suddenly freeze, motionless. We see Rilke and  
the end table with book and vase with rose.

RILKE

All is at rest: darkness and light,  
blossom and book.

TITLE: 23

EXT. FLYING AMONG CLOUDS - DAY

CG or stock footage of a slim needle-like aircraft performing aerobatics.

RILKE (O.S.)

Till then, when flight no longer  
merely climbs into the silent  
heavens of its own free will,  
wholly self-reliant, profile  
slender and appealing, darling of  
the winds, device succeeding,  
playing, wheeling confident and  
slim - not until an instrument  
developing a pure intent conquers  
youthful pride will, quickened by  
his victory, whoever nears the  
finish be what he alone flies.

TITLE: 24

INT. FACTORY - DAY (STOCK FOOTAGE?)

Automobiles being assembled. Production planners point at a complicated flow chart.

RILKE (V.O.)

Just because they do not know the  
hard strong steel that we produce,  
should we offend the great unsuing  
gods, our oldest friends, or seek  
them suddenly upon a chart?

EXT. ROAD - DAY FOR NIGHT

Car wheels spinning. A car zooms off down a deserted highway. It pulls up to a banquet hall.

RILKE (V.O.)

These mighty friends, who take away  
the dead, do not move in the  
circles of our gears.

INT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

Well-dressed people feast in a banquet hall.

RILKE (V.O.)

We hold our banquets far away from  
here,

(CONTINUED)

Women primp at the mirror in the elegant bathroom.

RILKE (O.S.)  
seclude our baths,

People leave the banquet, get back into their cars, and drive off. One car (same as before) drives up a long straight incline and dwindles into the distance.

RILKE (V.O.)  
and always speed ahead of their  
slow messengers. Now just depending  
on each other, ignorant of each  
other, we no longer blaze a trail  
with lovely bending, but just a  
slope.

INT. FACTORY - DAY (STOCK FOOTAGE?)

The fire under a boiler or furnace. Mechanical hammers rise slowly and suddenly drop.

RILKE (O.S.)  
The former fires burn only in  
boilers now and lift the ever  
bigger hammers. But we lose our  
strength, like swimmers.

TITLE: 25

INT. DOOR OF THE DEAD

Rilke rises from his armchair. He walks over to where Wera is dancing. CHOREOGRAPHY TO BE INSERTED LATER.

RILKE  
But you, now I'll remember you,  
whom I knew like a flower, whose  
name I couldn't guess; once more  
show you to them, stolen from us,  
bright playmate of the  
insurmountable cry.

RILKE  
Dancer first, who, suddenly paused  
in mid-step, like someone cast your  
youth in bronze, was caught;  
grieving and listening. Then, from  
the high adepts music fell into  
your altered heart.

(CONTINUED)

RILKE

Sickness was near. The blood,  
 already seized by shadows,  
 darkened, pulsed. Like a suspect  
 flees, it burst out in its natural  
 spring;

RILKE

disrupted by dark and collapse,  
 would scintillate earthly, earthly.

Wera walks slowly to the door of the dead and enters it.

RILKE

Till after awful pounding it  
 stepped into the hopeless open  
 gate.

TITLE: 26

INT. STAGE

Rilke watches Orpheus sits sadly playing to himself. A MAENAD approaches and tries to seduce Orpheus, fails, and leaves angrily. Another tries, fails, and stomps off. A pair try to seduce him together, and fail. The whole group offers themselves, but he merely gets up and walks away.

The group attacks him in anger, but he deftly dances away while playing his lyre continuously.

RILKE

But you, divine, to the last  
 resonating when swarms of scorned  
 maenads were bent on your murder,  
 you drowned out their shouting with  
 beautiful order, from out the  
 destroyers rose uplifting playing.

They begin to pick up rocks and hurl them at Orpheus. As the rocks touch him, they turn into ears, bounce off him, and fall to the ground.

RILKE

No one there damaged your head or  
 your lyre, however they rushed you  
 or rested apart; and all the sharp  
 rocks they threw at your heart grew  
 soft when they touched you and able  
 to hear.

(CONTINUED)

The mob overwhelms Orpheus and tackle him to the ground, completely covering him in bodies. As he is going down he strikes one final chord. They dismember him and fling his arms and legs away.

RILKE

In the end they dismembered you,  
driven by vengeance, but your sound  
yet lingered in cliffs and lions,  
in forests and birds. Even now, you  
still sing there.

Oh desolate god! You unending trail out! Only since blind hatred strew you about are we now hearers and a mouth for nature.

TITLE: Part II

TITLE: 1

INT. DANCE STUDIO WITH MIRRORS

A class of DANCERS is led through a Tai Chi breathing exercise.

RILKE

Breath, you invisible poem! Pure  
continual exchange of our existence  
for the world's extent.  
Counterbalance, wherein I  
rhythmically recur. Solitary wave,  
whose ocean I become by degrees;  
you sparsest of all possible seas -  
what space you save! How many of  
these spots of spaces were inside  
me already! Many a wind is like a  
son to me. Do you recognize me,  
air, you so full of my former  
places? You, smooth bark that  
girds, roundness and leaf of my  
words.

TITLE: 2

INT. MUZOT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Rilke sits thinking by the fire. Suddenly he has an idea, looks around frantically for something to write on, grabs a scrap of paper and a pen.

(CONTINUED)

RILKE (V.O.)

Just like the near-at-hand paper he  
snatches sometimes captures the  
master's genuine stroke:

Fade to:

INT. DRESSING ROOM WITH MIRROR

Wera sits at a dressing table wearing a slip. She tries out a dress by holding it up in front of her. She looks pleased at her reflection in the mirror. She turns on the lights around the mirror, examines her face closely. Her breath fogs the mirror. As the fog fades, we change focus to see Rilke's reflection in the mirror

RILKE (O.S.)

so a mirror often catches the holy  
single smile of a maiden when she  
tries on the morning, all alone -  
or by flattering light's glow. But  
where her true face's breath would  
fall, later, just a reflection  
shows.

INT. MUZOT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Rilke stares into the embers in the fireplace.

RILKE

What did eyes once see in the slow  
sooty smoldering of the hearth?  
Glimpses of life, forever  
gone. Who knows the losses of the  
earth? Only he, whose praise goes  
on singing the heart that is born  
in the whole.

TITLE: 3

INT. DRESSING ROOM WITH MIRROR

The mirror.

RILKE (V.O.)

Mirror: no one ever set into rhyme  
before, what your own being  
is. You, filled with nothing but  
holes of sieves like interstices of  
time.

INT. DANCE STUDIO WITH MIRRORS

The room is empty, and the mirrors just reflect the room.

RILKE (V.O.)  
Still squanderer of empty halls -

INT. MOUNTAIN LODGE - DUSK

A mirror reflects trees seen through the window.

RILKE (V.O.)  
wide as the woods, when twilight  
falls ...

INT. BALLROOM WITH CHANDELIERS

Mirrors reflect the many points of light in the chandeliers.

RILKE (V.O.)  
impenetrable. But chandeliers  
pierce you like sixteen-point  
antlers.

INT. ART MUSEUM

Mirrors reflect paintings.

RILKE (V.O.)  
Sometimes you're full of paintings.  
A few seem to have gone straight  
into you - others, your shyness  
dismisses.

INT. DRESSING ROOM WITH MIRROR

Wera is back at the mirror, wearing the dress now, checking her makeup, entranced by herself.

RILKE (V.O.)  
Ah, but the loveliest lingers  
there, till in her captive cheeks  
appears the clear relaxed  
Narcissus.

TITLE: 4

INT. STAGE

A pool of light comes up on UNICORN (with no horn), which dances horse-like. Watching it from the shadowy edges are a family of four (MOTHER, FATHER, SISTER, BROTHER).

RILKE (V.O.)

Oh this is the animal that never was. They knew it not but loved it anyways - from its neck, its prancing, its pose, to the light of its tranquil gaze.

The Unicorn continues to dance. The family circles and jostles at the edges, but does not approach it.

RILKE (V.O.)

Of course, it wasn't real. But it grew pure because they loved it. Always, they left space. And in the space, uncluttered and so clear, it hardly needed to exist, yet raised its head. They never fed it any corn, just always hope: to be was possible.

Unicorn twists and contorts itself, hiding its head. When it stands straight again, it has a single horn on its head.

RILKE (V.O.)

And this gave such strength to the animal that it bore on its brow a horn. One horn.

Sister is sitting by a mirror. Unicorn approaches her and lays its head in her lap. We see both them and their reflections.

RILKE (V.O.)

All white, it came up to a virgin girl - and was in the silver mirror and in her.

TITLE: 5

INT. STAGE

A group of dancers on the ground forms a closed anemone blossom with their limbs. Rilke watches. Slowly the blossom opens.

(CONTINUED)

RILKE

Flower-muscle, that opens the  
 anemone meadow-mornings little by  
 little, until the light of heaven's  
 loud polyphony pours into its womb  
 of petals, in the flower-aster's  
 silence, tense muscle of endless  
 receiving, sometimes overcome by  
 such abundance,

After fully opening, the blossom slowly closes.

RILKE

that the sleep-sign of evening is  
 hardly able to give the  
 widely-sprung petal-edges back to  
 you, then: you, so many worlds'  
 power and directive! We last  
 longer, we the violent ones. But in  
 which of all our lives, oh when,  
 will we at last be open and  
 receptive?

TITLE: 6

INT. STAGE

Rilke kneels next to the endtable with vase and rose. He holds up a primitive WILD ROSE first, then looks at the one in the vase.

RILKE

Rose, you sit enthroned, who in  
 antiquity were just a calyx with a  
 simple border. But to us you are  
 the full innumerable flower, the  
 inexhaustible state of charity.

He rises and walks over to ROSE DANCER, who is wrapped in a mantle of many layers of red cloth resembling rose petals.

RILKE

In your richness you seem to wrap  
 mantle on mantle around a body of  
 nothing but brilliance; but a  
 single petal is also the avoidance  
 and total denial of all apparel.

Rose Dancer slowly rises on green stem-legs, then explodes out of her mantle, flinging its petal-pieces into the air. She is scantily clad but resembles the interior of an open rose. She rushes off-screen, having given us only a glance. The petals remain suspended, floating slowly down.

(CONTINUED)

RILKE

Across the span of centuries, your  
fragrance calls out all its  
sweetest names to us; suddenly it  
hangs like glory in the air.

Rilke looks wistfully after her, then turns to the camera.

RILKE

Still, we don't know what it's  
called, we guess ... And memory  
passes over in silence all that we  
capture from the evocative hour.

TITLE: 7

EXT. FLOWER TABLE - DAY, IN OPEN SHADE

A group of young women (Maiden #1, Maiden #2, Maiden #3, Maiden #4) are gathered around a long table with bunches of CUT FLOWERS, VASES, BASINS and PITCHERS of water. They are wearing floral outfits and have flowers in their hair, and are obviously arranging the flowers in vases, as if for a wedding. Closeup of some flowers laying on the table.

RILKE (V.O.)

Flowers, you finally related to  
arranging hands, (hands of maidens  
from then and now), who'd lay  
across the garden table's span,  
gently wounded and tired out,

A girl's hands pick up the flowers and immerse them in a long deep basin of water, submerging them, and then raise them up, water dripping.

RILKE (V.O.)

waiting for water, so you could  
just about recover from the death  
begun, and now raised again between  
the streaming rods of tender  
fingers, that can do more good than  
you ever suspected;

The girl places the flowers in a vase, caressing them tenderly. Time lapse of the flowers reviving.

RILKE (V.O.)

light-headed, when you slowly  
revived again in the jar, cooling  
and giving off the warmth of the  
maidens,

(CONTINUED)

The girls carry off their vases full of flowers, holding each vase in a close embrace, as if hugging someone. They pause for a moment together, and we see beautiful flowers and beautiful faces together.

RILKE (V.O.)  
like confessions of sins, so  
wearisome and gloomy, that you  
committed by being picked, your  
bond to them, who band with you in  
blooming.

TITLE: 8

EXT. PARK - DAY

A few young boys (Boy #1, Boy #2, Boy #3, Boy #4) run and play tag in a garden-like park. A pair of them slow down and walk together, not talking.

RILKE (V.O.)  
You few, playmates of former  
childhood in the city's scattered  
gardens and walks: how we found  
each other and slowly became  
friends and, like the lamb with the  
scroll that talks, spoke though  
mute. If sometime we exulted, no  
one owned it. Whose could it be?  
And how it melted under the passing  
multitude and in the long year's  
anxiety.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

They walk down a sidewalk, next to houses, as cars pass in the street.

RILKE (V.O.)  
Cars rolled past, ephemeral to us,  
alien, houses stood near, thick but  
untrue - and none ever knew us.  
What was real in the All?

EXT. PARK - DAY

Their faces light up. They run off to join several other boys throwing a brightly-colored, basketball-sized BALL to each other. One throws the ball very high. Boy #4 steps under to catch it. The frame freezes just before the ball reaches his fingers.

(CONTINUED)

RILKE (V.O.)

Nothing. Just the balls. Their glorious arcs. Not even the children ... but sometimes one, in the park, one who was dying, stepped under the falling ball.

TITLE: In memoriam Egon von Rilke (superimposed on freeze frame)

TITLE: 9

INT. DUNGEON WITH TORTURE INSTRUMENTS

Rilke walks past a RACK and past IRONS and chains on the wall.

RILKE

Don't be proud, you judges, of the unused racks or that irons are no longer locked around necks. Since your conscious fits of mercy just aren't that much of a stretch, they uplift no heart.

EXT. GALLOWS - DAY

Rilke stares at the hangman's noose, then walks down the gallows steps and down a dusty street, lecturing at the camera sternly.

RILKE

The gallows gives back again what it receives over time, like children their toys from previous birthdays. In the pure, in the high, in the wide open heart he treads differently, the god of real mercy. He comes violently and grips radiance around him, deified. More than a wind for the great secure ships.

Rilke pauses. Boy #3 plays in the dirt with a toy sailing ship. Rilke kneels. The child turns to look at him serenely.

RILKE

Not less than the secret faint admitting that silently wins us over inside like a quiet playing child from infinite mating.

TITLE: 10

INT. FACTORY - DAY (STOCK FOOTAGE?)

More heavy machinery operating, without humans. Automatic cutting of stone blocks.

RILKE (V.O.)

All we've gained is threatened by the machine, for as long as it has a willful spirit and won't obey. To show the lovely lingering of masters' hands no more, for its resolute building it cuts the stone in a stiffer way.

Computers and robots.

RILKE (V.O.)

Nowhere does it hold back, so we once break free and it stays oiling itself in the quiet factory. It is life - it wants to know and be involved, and orders and creates and destroys with equal resolve.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Rilke stands in a cathedral-like grove of redwood trees. He feels the bark of one tree and kneels before it like at an altar.

RILKE

But to us existence is still enchanted; still source at a hundred places. A play of purest force, that no one touches, who doesn't kneel and admire.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

Rilke sits next to a gurgling stream. We hear the stream sounds slowly fade in as Rilke finishes speaking. Water flows over rocks.

RILKE

Words still come softly to the Unsayable ... and the music, ever new, from trembling stones, builds in useless space its house of prayer.

TITLE: 11

EXT. CAVERN - DAY

A group of hunters (HUNTER WITH SHOTGUN, HUNTER WITH STRIP, HUNTER #3, HUNTER #4) stands over a cavernous hole in the ground (ideally, the actual cavern of Karst). They slowly lower STRIP OF SAIL into the cavern.

RILKE (V.O.)

Many calm ordered methods of death  
prevail, ever-conquering man, since  
in hunting you persist; but more  
than trap and net, I know you,  
strip of sail that they hung down  
into the cavernous Karst.

INT. CAVERN - DAY

We dimly see a great many DOVES resting inside the cavern as the strip is lowered past them.

RILKE (V.O.)

Soft, they let you in, like you  
were an emblem to celebrate peace.

EXT. CAVERN - DAY

Hunter with strip begins violently jerking the cloth

RILKE (V.O.)

But then: one yanked on your hem, -

INT. CAVERN - DAY

The strip whips about wildly, frightening the birds, who take flight.

EXT. CAVERN - DAY

Birds pour out of the cavern mouth.

RILKE (V.O.)

and, out of the cavern, the night  
hurled a handful of white  
fluttering doves into light ... but  
that too is in the right.

(CONTINUED)

Hunter with SHOTGUN tracks the birds' flight and fires. The rest of the hunting party watches happily.

RILKE (V.O.)

Far from the watchers is every breath of pity, not just from the hunter alone, who fulfills his duty, vigilant and businesslike, and promptly proves it.

A hunter picks up DEAD DOVES.

RILKE (V.O.)

To kill is one form of our roaming remorse ... What happens to ourselves, of course, is pure, in the sanguine spirit.

TITLE: 12

INT. MUZOT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Rilke watches the flickering flames in the fireplace.

RILKE

Want transformation. Oh, take inspiration from the flame, wherein something escapes from you, which flaunts its very burning; each architecting spirit which has mastered the mundane, loves in the swirl of symbol best of all the point of turning.

EXT. QUARRY - DAY

A muscular WORKMAN carries a medium-sized gray ROCK and sets it down on a flat rocky spot. He raises a large SLEDGEHAMMER as if to shatter the rock.

RILKE (V.O.)

What stays shut up inside itself, already is solidified; does it dream it's safe in the shelter of inconspicuous grays? Wait, from far away the Hardest warns the hard and petrified. Alas - an absent hammer is upraised!

INT. MUZOT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Rilke pours water from a Pitcher into a clear GLASS.

RILKE

He who pours out like a spring is  
realized by Realization; it leads  
him on in rapture through ebullient  
creation, that often ends with  
starting and with ending oft  
begins.

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE - DAY

Brother, dressed for hiking, waves goodbye to Mother and  
turns to walk off briskly, smiling.

RILKE (V.O.)

Every happy space is child or  
grandchild of separation,

EXT. HIKING TRAIL - DAY

Brother hikes along a tree-lined dirt trail near a  
river. He sees something, stops, and stares in amazement.

RILKE (V.O.)

through which they go amazed. And  
Daphne, after transformation,

CGI of a hybrid between a woman (Daphne) and a laurel  
tree. Wind blows through the tree and rustles its leaves.

RILKE (V.O.)

wants, since she feels laurel, that  
you turn yourself to wind.

TITLE: 13

EXT. TRAIN STATION - EVENING, SNOW

Snow falls. Rilke, bundled in a heavy OVERCOAT, stands on  
the platform. Lover climbs a few steps, pauses and turns to  
look at Rilke sadly, then finishes climbing into the  
train. The train accelerates and pulls out of the station.

RILKE (V.O.)

Be ahead of all parting, as if it  
were behind you, like the winter  
you just weathered.

INT. MUZOT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Rilke comes in from outside with snow on his coat. He takes off the coat, hangs it up, and sits in his armchair by the fire.

RILKE (V.O.)

Because among the winters there is one so endless winter, that, once you overwinter it, your heart survives forever.

MONTAGE

- 1) Rilke asleep in his bed
- 2) Rilke waking up full of energy,
- 3) Rilke eating breakfast
- 4) Rilke writing excitedly at his desk.

RILKE (V.O.)

Be always dead in Eurydice - rise up singing, rise up praising, once again concerned with purer matters.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Rilke is finishing dinner. He raises a glass, peers at it closely, holds it out at arms length. The glass vibrates and shatters.

RILKE (V.O.)

Be here, among the dwindling, in the realm of leaning, be a ringing glass, that in sounding swiftly shatters.

EXT. RILKE'S GRAVE - DAY, WINTER

Rilke stands in a graveyard looking at a gravestone. We see the gravestone is his own.

RILKE (V.O.)

Be - but still know non-being's conditions, the infinite foundation of your innermost vibration, so you fulfill it fully in this only time around.

## MONTAGE

Fast cuts between various images of dead animals, bones, and fossils, emphasizing large quantities.

RILKE (V.O.)

To all the used-up, silent stale  
provisions of abundant nature, the  
unspeakable summation,

EXT. RILKE'S GRAVE - DAY, WINTER

Rilke kneels and embraces his gravestone.

RILKE (V.O.)

count yourself in joyously and  
cancel out the count.

TITLE: 14

INT. STAGE

A row of female dancers dressed as flowers (with petals around their faces) kneel side-by-side on the floor and bob around slightly as if being touched by a gentle breeze. Their faces are smiling, carefree, and happy. Rilke stands close by and describes them.

RILKE

See these flowers, faithful to the  
earth, and to whom we lend fate  
from the edge of fate - but, who  
knows? If they repent their  
withering, it's up to us to be  
their only penance.

Rilke suddenly lays down on the flowers, smiling. Their faces register surprise, pain, and unhappiness as they are crushed to the floor.

RILKE

All would float. And yet we act  
like burdens, lay down on  
everything, thrilled with our  
weight; what draining teachers we  
are for the things, who are happy  
with eternal adolescence.

Rilke gets off the flowers, lays down in front of them, and closes his eyes as they gather around his head.

(CONTINUED)

RILKE

If one took them into heartfelt  
sleep and slept deeply with things  
- oh he'd get light as air, changed  
for a changed day, from the common  
depth.

Rilke gets up and sits in the center of the row. He and the  
flowers bob together, smiling and happy as before.

RILKE

Or perhaps he'd stay. And they  
would bloom and praise him, the  
convert, who looks like one of  
theirs, all silent sisters in the  
meadow breeze.

TITLE: 15

EXT. FOUNTAIN - DAY

Rilke sits on the edge of an old marble fountain. Water  
pours out of a gargyle mouth and splashes into the basin.

RILKE

Oh wellspring-mouth, you giving  
orifice, who inexhaustible Oneness,  
Purenness, speaks - you, before the  
water's flowing face, marble mask.

Behind the fountain and Rilke we see snow-covered mountains.

RILKE

And in the distant peaks the  
aqueducts' origins.

EXT. MOUNTAINS - DAY

Montage of water melting off snow, running through creeks,  
past a graveyard, gathering force and volume as it collects  
down hill.

RILKE (V.O.)

From far away hillsides of the  
Apennines, past graves, they carry  
rumors to you,

EXT. FOUNTAIN - DAY

Water pours from the gargoyle mouth which is dark-stained where wet.

RILKE

tales that then, over the  
age-blackening of your chin, spill  
into the receptacle before you.

Rilke rests his head dreamily on the edge of the fountain's basin.

RILKE

This is the ear laid down to sleep,  
the marble ear, in which you always  
speak. An ear of Earth.

Rilke sits up and contemplates the mouth and basin. He inserts a CUP into the falling stream of water.

RILKE

Just with herself, therefore, alone  
she talks. And if you slip a cup  
in, it seems to her, that you are  
interrupting.

Rilke drinks from the cup.

TITLE: 16

EXT. MEADOW - DAY

Rilke stands at a fence between a plowed field and a pristine meadow. He indicates first the field, then the meadow.

RILKE

Always torn open by us again, the  
god is the place grown whole. We  
are sharpness, for we want to know,  
but he is spread out and serene.

NEED MORE HERE (this one is hard)

RILKE

Even a pure, a hallowed donation he  
accepts in his world no  
differently, than by standing in  
fixed opposition to any end that's  
free.

INT. HADES, POND

Orpheus, standing by the pond, motions several dead over to him. They drink from it.

RILKE (V.O.)

Here, we hear the well from which  
only the dead drink, when the god  
silently beckons them, the dead.

EXT. MEADOW - DAY

Rilke is in the meadow. A LAMB walks up to him and stops. He places a BELL ON A RIBBON around its neck.

RILKE

But the noise is all that we ever  
get. And the lamb, out of quieter  
instinct, requests its bell.

TITLE: 17

EXT. ORCHARD - DAY

Rilke strolls through a fruit orchard.

RILKE

Where, in which always blissful  
watered orchard, on which trees,  
from which  
tenderly-stripped-of-petals  
blossom-calices ripen the exotic  
fruits of relief?

Rilke stops and bends down to pick up a single large perfect FRUIT. He examines the fruit in amazement.

RILKE

Those ample, tasty, of which you  
maybe find one in the trampled  
meadow of your poverty. At one or  
another time you wondered at the  
size of the fruit, at the softness  
of its skin, at its being unharmed,  
and that the carelessness of a bird  
didn't beat you to it nor the low  
jealousy of a worm.

Sunlight filters through the trees. Fruit hangs from the branches.

(CONTINUED)

RILKE

Are there then trees, thronging  
with angels, and by slow secluded  
gardeners so strangely trained,  
that they bear us, without to us  
belonging?

Rilke walks off through the orchard.

RILKE

Have we never been able, we shadows  
and shades, through our hasty  
ripening and withering again, to  
disturb the repose of those calm  
summer glades?

TITLE: 18

INT. STAGE

Wera dances. She whirls, evokes a tree. The light becomes warmer, golden.

RILKE (V.O.)

Dancer: oh you translation of all  
that's transient into action: you  
did it here! And the whirl at the  
end, that tree made of motion, did  
it not take control of the whole  
sweeping year? Didn't the treetop  
around which your soaring swarmed  
suddenly blossom with stillness?  
Above it, too, wasn't it sun,  
wasn't it summer, the warmth, this  
unlimited warmth from you?

Wera's spin fades into:

INT. POTTERY STUDIO

A clay vase being shaped on a potter's wheel.

A row of finished vases and one (larger) urn.

RILKE (V.O.)

But it bore too, it bore, your tree  
of ecstasis. Aren't these your  
peaceful fruits: the vases striped  
with ripening, and the riper urn?

INT. MUZOT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Rilke sits looking at a PHOTO OF WERA from the above dance; it is motion-blurred and her dark eyebrow makes a line across it.

RILKE

And in the photos: isn't there the mark remaining, that your eyebrow's stroke so dark wrote quickly on the wall of its own turn?

TITLE: 19

EXT. BANK - DAY - ESTABLISHING

The facade of a bank.

INT. GOLD VAULT (STOCK FOOTAGE?)

Gold piled up in a bank vault.

RILKE (V.O.)

Somewhere the gold lives in a bank, pampered, the confidante of thousands.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY

A blind, dirty unkempt BEGGAR sits begging with his hand open. A passerby drops a penny into it. The beggar drops the coin into his cup and holds out his hand again.

RILKE (V.O.)

Yet any blindman, a beggar, is to a copper penny like a lost place, a dusty nook under the hamper.

INT. BOUTIQUES - DAY

Montage of expensive stores and their goods.

RILKE (V.O.)

Money seems right at home in the stores, thinly disguised in silk, flowers and furs.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - EVENING

We see that the beggar is sitting between the bank and a fancy boutique. His hand is still out.

RILKE (V.O.)  
 He, silent, stands in the pause  
 between breathing of all of the  
 money that's awake or sleeping.

INT. HOMELESS SHELTER - NIGHT

The beggar sleeps under a think BLANKET that is too small to cover him completely. His begging hand is stiffly open.

RILKE (V.O.)  
 Oh how can it close at night, this  
 always open hand?

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - MORNING

The beggar is back to work.

RILKE (V.O.)  
 In the morning fate grabs it again,  
 and each day holds it out: pale,  
 wretched, ever destructible.

Rilke crouches next to the begger.

RILKE  
 If only one who saw, amazed, would  
 finally understand and laud its  
 long survival. Only a singer might  
 say. Only to a god would it be  
 audible.

TITLE: 20

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT

We see a night sky full of stars. Pan down to see two houses, each with one lit window containing one child. CHILD #1 seen through window. CHILD #2 seen through other window. The two houses again.

RILKE (V.O.)  
 Between the stars, how far; yet,  
 how much farther is what our own  
 neighbors can impart. One, for  
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RILKE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
 example, a child ... next door,  
 another - oh how inconceivably far  
 apart.

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

YOUNG MAN walks YOUNG WOMAN up onto the porch of her house. He tries to kiss her on the lips, but she frowns and turns her head so he only kisses her cheek. She pushes away from him, but then smiles brightly before disappearing into her house. He stares at the door with a mixture of sadness and hope.

RILKE (V.O.)  
 Fate, it maybe measures us in spans  
 of lifetimes, which to us seems  
 somehow wrong; but think how many  
 spans from girl to man, when she  
 both puts him off and leads him on.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Inside, Young Woman sits down to eat dinner with her family. The cover on a SILVER SERVING DISH is lifted to reveal that the main course is a large whole cooked fish. Slow zoom in on the fish's gaping mouth.

RILKE (V.O.)  
 All's far - and nowhere does the  
 circle close. See, on the table  
 gaily laid, in a dish, the strange  
 face of fish. Fish are speechless  
 ... once we thought. Who knows? But  
 isn't there at last a place in  
 which one speaks the fish's  
 language, without fish?

TITLE: 21

EXT. PERSIAN GARDEN - DAY

A beautiful Persian garden with fig trees, roses, and a flowing fountain. We move by the fountain and rose bushes.

RILKE (V.O.)  
 Sing the gardens, my heart, which  
 you know not; clear, unreachable,  
 like gardens poured in glass. Water  
 and roses from Isfahan or Shiraz:

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RILKE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
sing blessings, praise them,  
nothing can compare.

We move forward through blossom-laden branches, which quiver in the breeze, toward a door of the house.

RILKE (V.O.)  
Point out, my heart, that you never  
miss these. That intended for you  
are their ripening figs. That you  
fly through them, between  
blossoming twigs, just like over a  
face blows the rising breeze.

INT. PERSIAN HOUSE - DAY

We enter the house and see Rilke standing in front of a magnificent TAPESTRY. Rilke indicates the tapestry with his hand. Details of the tapestry.

RILKE  
Don't ever believe that bereavement  
is due to a choice that you made:  
namely, to be!. Silk thread, in  
this fabric you're woven all  
through. And no matter what image  
you hold to be you (even if it's a  
moment of sheer agony), know the  
whole awesome tapestry's purpose is  
true.

TITLE: 22

EXT. LARGE FOUNTAIN - DAY

Rilke stands by a large gushing fountain in a park.

RILKE  
Oh the marvelous overflows of our  
existence, in spite of all fate, in  
parks, effervescence -

EXT. STONE WALL WITH PORTAL - DAY

A stone wall with a large keystone-arch portal, statues near the top of the portal, and a balcony higher up.

(CONTINUED)

RILKE (V.O.)  
or like the stone figures next to  
the keystones of tall portals  
raised under balconies.

INT. CHURCH BELL TOWER - DAY

A bronze church bell strikes.

RILKE (V.O.)  
Oh the brazen bell, that lifts its  
cudgel each day against everyday  
monotone.

EXT. TEMPLE OF KARNAK, EGYPT - DAY

A single stone column stands upright amidst the wreckage of  
the temple. Rilke stands next to it.

RILKE  
Or the column, the column in  
Karnak, the one that outlived the  
nearly eternal temple.

EXT. CITY HIGHWAY - TIME LAPSE DAY INTO NIGHT

Long shot, cars rush by as the daylight fades into night.

RILKE (V.O.)  
The same surplus plummets past  
today, but only as rushing, from  
flat yellow day on into the night,  
too much dazzled with light.

EXT. CITY HIGHWAY - DAY

Highway with no traffic. Pan up to see contrails in the sky  
and an airplane taking off.

RILKE (V.O.)  
But the race leaves no trail after  
it's gone by. Curves of flight  
through the air, and those who fly:  
maybe none are for naught. But just  
as they thought.

TITLE: 23

EXT. ORCHARD - DAY, SPRING

Rilke sits in a chair reading under a large tree, as Dog sits up next to him and watches pleadingly. Rilke glances at Dog, puts down his book, and reaches to pet Dog, but Dog suddenly turns and bolts away.

RILKE (V.O.)

Call me to this hour of yours that  
constantly escapes you: near,  
pleading, like a dog, but then  
always turning away just when you  
think to catch it finally. It is  
most ours, what thus retreated.  
Where we at first thought to be  
greeted, we are released. Then we  
are free.

Rilke stands up and grabs onto a tree branch. He begins climbing the tree.

RILKE (V.O.)

Afraid, we seek a solid hold, we,  
too young sometimes for the old and  
too old for what never was.

Rilke sits on a branch of a blossoming fruit tree. The camera pulls back to show that a worker is sawing at the branch to cut it off the trunk.

RILKE (V.O.)

We're fair just when we praise,  
because we are the saw and the  
bough of spring and the sweetness  
of danger ripening.

TITLE: 24

EXT. FARM FIELD - DAY

Crops growing in a plowed field.

RILKE (V.O.)

Oh this longing, ever new, from  
loosened clay!

EXT. BAY - DAY

An ancient-style wooden ship sails through the ocean. It approaches an ancient Mediterranean city.

RILKE (V.O.)  
 Nearly no one helped the earliest  
 ventures. Cities were built despite  
 that on blissful bays;

EXT. MARKETPLACE - DAY

A bustling marketplace. A merchant fills small jars of oil from a larger one.

RILKE (V.O.)  
 despite it, oil and water filled  
 the pitchers.

EXT. TEMPLE - DAY

We see a large statue of a god, which is then destroyed by an earthquake or other disaster.

RILKE (V.O.)  
 We draw our gods at first in daring  
 plans, which grumpy fate destroys  
 for us again. But they are the  
 immortals. Look, we can at least  
 hear him, who hears us in the end.

INT. ANCIENT HOUSE - DAY

A large family (MOTHER, FATHER, and many CHILDREN) sits around, the parents nearly buried in their offspring.

RILKE (V.O.)  
 We, a thousand year lineage: mater  
 and pater, filled with future  
 children, always more, which once  
 outstripping us, will shake us,  
 later.

INT. ANCIENT HOUSE - DAY, YEARS LATER

The Father, now an old man, lays in his bed. He looks about to die. Several of the Dead appear at his bedside.

(CONTINUED)

RILKE (V.O.)

We endlessly risked, what time we  
call our own! And only Death,  
discreet, knows what we are, and  
his profit, when he puts us out to  
loan.

TITLE: 25

EXT. FARM - DAY, EARLY SPRING, ESTABLISHING

A farm. There is still a little snow on the ground. Water  
drips from melting icicles.

EXT. FARM FIELD - DAY, EARLY SPRING

A plow-man plows the field.

RILKE (V.O.)

Already, the first ploughs at work,  
do you hear? Listen; again the  
human hurly-burly in the stiff  
stillness of the hard early spring  
earth.

Early flowers like daffodils are coming up through the  
snow. Small animals peek out from their burrows.

RILKE (V.O.)

No longer does the coming appear  
flavorless. That which so often  
seemed like what had come before,  
comes back as new. Always expected,  
maybe even dreamed, still you never  
took it. It took you.

EXT. OAK TREE - EVENING

A frozen oak tree still carries a few brown leaves from the  
previous year. They rustle in the breeze.

RILKE (V.O.)

Even the leaves of an overwintered  
oak in the evening, brown, portend  
the future. Sometimes the winds  
leave themselves a token.

EXT. MEADOW - DAY, EARLY SPRING

A meadow with patches of snow. Dead-looking bushes are black. Cow droppings are black. Green grass sprouts.

RILKE (V.O.)

Black are the bushes. Yet piles of  
dung lie deeper black in the  
meadows, richer. Each hour that  
passes grows more young.

TITLE: 26

EXT. PARK - DAY

A windy springtime day. Rilke huddles against the wind. We hear a piercing bird cry.

RILKE

How we are gripped by a bird's cry  
... any uniquely-created cry.

Children run and play, shrieking. One is flying a kite while running.

RILKE (V.O.)

But the children, playing under  
open skies, already cry beyond  
actual cries.

The kite-flyer falls down and hurts himself. He screams in pain.

RILKE (V.O.)

Cry the accident. Into holes of  
this, of space (in which the whole  
bird cry is received, like men in  
dreams -), they drive the wedges of  
their screams.

Rilke watches the kite blow away. We see the tattered kite tumble.

RILKE

Alas, where are we? Free, like  
kites ripped loose from their  
moorings, laughter-edged, we race  
half-height, tattered by wind.

The children run through the park as a crowd, carrying Orpheus' head and his lyre.

(CONTINUED)

RILKE (V.O.)

-Arrange the criers, singing god!  
to awaken roaring, bearing like  
torrent the head and the lyre.

TITLE: 27

EXT. HILL CASTLE - DAY

Rilke stands on a hillside in front of a castle.

RILKE

Is there really Time, the Reaver?  
On the calm hill, when does it  
crush the castle? This heart,  
belonging to the gods forever: when  
does the Demiurge make it his  
vassal?

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

A child reaches for a cookie jar on a high shelf, but knocks  
it down, and it shatters as it hits the floor.

RILKE (V.O.)

Are we really such fearfully  
breakable things as fate keeps  
telling us every day?

INT. DOOR OF THE DEAD

The child's face stares expressionlessly. We see he is  
standing before the Door Of The Dead.

RILKE (V.O.)

Does childhood, deep, full of  
promisings, later - in the roots -  
have nothing to say?

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

The child picks up pieces of the broken cookie jar and looks  
at it hopelessly. Behind him a couple of dead peer at it  
over his shoulder.

RILKE (V.O.)

Ah, the specter of the ephemeral  
wafts through the naive susceptible  
like the puff of smoke it is.

One of the dead leads the boy away while the other silently sweeps up the fragments.

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

A dead tucks the sleeping boy into bed.

RILKE (V.O.)  
 As that which we are, as the  
 drivers, we're still regarded by  
 lasting powers as divine  
 necessities.

TITLE: 28

INT. STAGE

Wera dances. CHOREOGRAPHY TO BE ADDED LATER.

RILKE (V.O.)  
 Oh come and go. Though still a  
 child, enhance for the blink of an  
 eye your dance-figure to a pure  
 constellation of that dance where  
 we for a moment transcend the poor  
 boring order of Nature.

RILKE (V.O.)  
 For it stirred to fully hearing  
 first at Orpheus' song. From then  
 on you believed, and got disturbed  
 a little if a tree took very long  
 deciding to go with you just by  
 ear. For you still knew the place,  
 where the lyre arose resounding -  
 the center of elation.

RILKE (V.O.)  
 So, you attempted pretty pirouettes  
 in hopes that your friend's course  
 and face might yet be turned toward  
 the perfect celebration.

TITLE: 29

INT. DANCE STUDIO WITH MIRRORS

Reprise of breathing scene.

RILKE (V.O.)  
Still friend of many distances,  
feel how your breath increases  
space even now.

INT. CHURCH BELL TOWER - EVENING

Reprise of bell ringing scene.

RILKE (V.O.)  
In the timber-frames of shadowy  
bell towers, let yourself ring.

INT. TABLE WITH FRUIT

Reprise slithering dead grabbing fruit from the bowl. They mime eating the fruit and stand up strengthened.

RILKE (V.O.)  
That which saps your powers grows  
ever stronger from this sustenance.

INT. LYRE DOOR

Reprise Orpheus passing through the lyre door.

RILKE (V.O.)  
Through transformation, cross the  
borderline.

INT. TABLE

Reprise Lament counting, and then holding up necklace.

RILKE (V.O.)  
What's your most sorrowful  
experience? If drinking you is  
bitter, turn to wine.

INT. STAGE

Reprise Rose Dancer exploding.

Reprise Boyfriend and Girlfriend dancing.

RILKE (V.O.)

Be, in this night of extravagances,  
magics at the crossroads of your  
senses, the sense they oddly all  
cohere.

EXT. RILKE'S GRAVE - DAY, WINTER

Rilke stands up from embracing his grave and walks away.

RILKE (V.O.)

And when the world no longer knows  
you, to the still earth say: I  
flow. To the rushing water speak:  
I'm here.