

THE PIT BELOW PARADISE

EPISODE 6

"A CELEBRATION"

By J. Evelyn Gaskell

MUSIC]

ANNOUNCER

Rusty Quill Presents: The Pit Below Paradise. Episode Six – A Celebration.

[MUSIC]

SCENE 1

(INT. - MORNING. A GREEN HOUSE ON RANCH PROPERTY. RUTH AND YURI WORK TOGETHER TRIMMING LEAVES AND REPOTTING PLANTS IN NEAR SILENCE, HER AS HIS PROTEGÉ.)

SOUND: CLIPPERS SNIPPING DEAD LEAVES.

RUTH (NARRATING)

It felt wrong to be somewhere so peaceful then. Dorian was still on ordered bed rest from his mother, which I found absurd, and I hadn't heard from Will yet. But here I was, alone with someone else's dad in the greenhouse he cherished, as if I could really trust Yuri as badly as I wanted to. As if jealousy could force honesty.

**YURI
(MOSTLY A GRUNT, POINTING)**

That.

**SOUND: RUTH PASSES HIM A
PLANTER.**

**RUTH
Here you go.**

**RUTH (NARRATING)
He seemed too gentle. Too calm to ever do anyone harm.**

**YURI
Now, water.**

**SOUND: RUTH POURS FROM A
WATERING CAN.**

YURI

Gentle.

RUTH

I got it, I got it.

SOUND: SHE LIFTS THE CAN.

YURI

(APPROVINGLY) Steady arms.

RUT

I thought it was sturdy arms.

YURI

(SHRUGS)

Both.

RUTH (NARRATING)

Whenever my father spoke to me, it was to remind me I didn't know as much as he did. Even if he was right about some things — like wanting to keep me safe — it was drowned out by how terribly he did it.

YURI

With these ones, you have to be careful how they take to water. Might grow strange.

RUTH

They grow beautifully.

SOUND: PAULETTE ENTERS.

PAULETTE

Yuri, darling? I need Ruth. Dorian and I would like to speak with her.

RUTH

Is he ready to head back to school?

PAULETTE

Not quite. We'll explain.

**SOUND: RUTH FOLLOWS PAULETTE TO
THE DOOR, TURNS BACK.**

RUTH

Thank you, Yuri.

YURI

What for?

RUTH

Teaching me so much.

YURI

We'll try brewing next.

SCENE 2

**(INT. - DORIAN'S BEDROOM, A SHORT WHILE LATER. DORIAN
IN BED, RUTH AND PAULETTE EACH SITTING AT THE END OF
IT.)**

RUTH

...A ceremony?

PAULETTE

Think of it more as a celebration. One that's been a long time coming.

RUTH

Like... a coming-of-age thing?

DORI

Mama, I don't know if——

PAULETTE

——Sort of.

**RUTH
(TO DORIAN)**

And that's why you aren't coming back to school yet?

DORI

—

PAULETTE

—Now, about that, Ruth, sweetie. The reason I wanted to talk to you is because we'd like to invite you to stay.

RUTH

S-Stay here?

PAULETTE

Yes. Permanently. You're such a sweetheart, and passionate. There is a place for you in the village if you want it. You don't have to go back, either.

RUTH

Okay but wait, but what is this ceremony thing? What does that have to do with anything?

PAULETTE

We can only tell you that if you agree to stay.

DORI

Have you heard from Will today?

PAULETTE

Now, Dorian, don't interrupt. We're talking about Ruth.

RUTH

(TO DORIAN) I haven't, no. Have you?

DORI

No. We can't find my radio.

RUTH

I'm sure he's fine.

PAULETTE

(ICY LAUGH)

Of course he is! He's probably still in bed. Yesterday was a long day for everybody. Now, Ruth, honey? We have some time. Maybe Yuri could bring you down to the village and you could take part in some of the festivities. What do you say?

RUTH

To staying? I'd like to.

PAULETTE

Then, that's settled! We're so happy to have you, honey.

DORI

So, now can we tell her——

PAULETTE

——I think you and Yuri *should* go to the village, come to think of it. Dori and I will have plenty to do today to prepare.

DORI

Maybe Ruth could help!

PAULETTE

No, no, let's let her enjoy herself, sweetie. After all, big changes are coming.

SCENE 3

(EXT. - VILLAGE, MORNING. YURI AND RUTH EXIT YURI'S CAR ONTO A WIDE GREEN FIELD WHERE PARISHIONERS BUSTLE ABOUT CONSTRUCTING TENTS AND TABLES OF FOOD.)

SOUND: CHEERS BREAK OUT AT
THE
SIGHT OF YURI. ONE PARISHIONER
STRIDES UP AND SHAKES HIS HAND.

PARISHIONER

Yuri! You must be so proud.

YURI

Mm. Thank you.

SOUND: PARISHIONER GOES.

RUTH

That was about Dori, right? Her ceremony today? When is that actually happening?

YURI

Dusk.

RUTH

(TO HERSELF) Okay, then there's some time.

SOUND: NEARBY, ZOE STRUGGLES UNDERNEATH MULTIPLE BASKETS OF BASIL LEAVES.

ZOE

Excuse me, could you help me with these baskets?

RUTH

Oh! Sure!

SOUND: RELIEVED, ZOE HANDS OFF A BASKET OF BASIL LEAVES TO RUTH.

ZOE

Oh! Ruth! It's you!

RUTH

Zoe?

ZOE

You remember me! Yeah. Oh, we're just headed to those tables.

SOUND: THEY HEAD INSIDE A TENT AND SET THEIR BASKETS ON A TABLE.

RUTH

Woah that's a lot of basil. What's this all for?

ZOE

The meal this afternoon.

RUTH

Is it *all* basil?

ZOE
(LAUGHS)

It is, yeah. I take it you're still a bit new.

RUTH

Uh, yeah. I guess I never asked before. Why basil?

ZOE

It's a pure herb. Very good for the body. The smell awakens your senses, and consuming it in any capacity stimulates the mind. Harriet says it can work miracles.

RUTH

Ah. Well, good to see you again, but I'm actually here with——

SOUND: YURI ENTERS THE TENT.

ZOE

——Yuri! I didn't expect to see your family at all today. Will you be joining in any festivities?

YURI

Just Ruth. Will you take her?

RUTH

Me?

YURI

Go help.

ZOE

That's a great idea! I'd love to show her around.

(TO RUTH)

But if you're going to stay and help out, you might want to change into something easier to clean. Want me to help you find some clothes?

RUTH

I —— Sure. Thanks. Can't hurt.

YURI

I'll get you before dusk.

RUTH

Okay...

**SOUND: HE LEAVES RUTH WITH ZOE.
TRANSITION TO LAUNDRY HOUSE.**

RUTH (NARRATING) (CONT'D)

So I let Zoe bring me to a place I could only describe as a laundry house. There were tons of clothes all lined up on different shelves, seemingly free for the taking. Zoe helped me make sure everything fit. But *what* was the big secret everyone was keeping?

**SOUND: RUTH PLAYS WITH HER LOOSE
SLEEVES.**

RUTH

Ooh. Alright. Not bad. I feel so free.

ZOE

You look much more comfortable now. Hey, do you want to try a new kind of meditation?

RUTH

Like, with prayer?

ZOE

Yes. Have you prayed with us yet?

RUTH

I've done a couple of the personal discovery programs in the area. It's like, you're talking to yourself, right? Not God?

**ZOE
(LAUGH)**

No, not God.

RUTH

Okay. Then... I still don't know *what* we're trying to achieve with prayer. Like, in the long run.

ZOE

Ruth... There's no long run anymore. *Today* is what we've prayed for.

RUTH

What's happening today?

ZOE

Total enlightenment — which you'll only be able to reach if your spirit builds the strength. So? What do you say?

RUTH

Can we talk more after prayer?

ZOE

Of course! I'll stay with you all day if you want.

RUTH

Then yeah, okay. I'll try.

SCENE 4

(INT. - COMING ONTO MIDDAY. THE BLACK ROOM, A SPECIAL CHAMBER WITHIN A CHAMBER WHERE CHURCH MEMBERS GO TO MEDITATE IN ABSOLUTE DARKNESS. ZOE AND RUTH STAND JUST OUTSIDE THE FINAL DOOR TO ENTER. OTHER CHURCH MEMBERS ARRIVE INTERMITTENTLY AND FILE INSIDE.)

RUTH

Whoa... *This* is the room?

ZOE

Catches you off guard, doesn't it? Harriet has found that sensory deprivation helps to provide a more complete praying experience. These sessions have been her specialty for years.

RUTH

So, it's just going to be completely dark in there the whole time?

ZOE

Don't be scared. Everyone does meditation in the black room. Oh, it's so amazing your first time!

RUTH

Okay... How long is it going to last? Does anything else happen?

ZOE

(COY)

You just have to see for yourself! I promise it's going to be so worth it. Ugh, I wish I could be you again.

RUTH

I mean, it's not gonna mess with me at all, is it?

ZOE

Ruth, how are you ever going to grow if you never experience any discomfort? You need to learn how to guide yourself with just your soul. You can still back out if you want...

RUTH

Well... If I go in there, will you at least sit next to me? I might freak out if I'm just sitting with my thoughts in total darkness.

ZOE

(RUEFUL)

Oh, I can't go in. Nobody is allowed to do the black room two days in a row. I went yesterday. If I'd known about the event beforehand, I definitely would have waited. No, I have to go with the body movement group outside.

**SOUND: HARRIET POKES HER HEAD
OUT OF THE CHAMBER.**

HARRIET

Ah, it's you. We're shutting the door. Coming in?

Yes, she is!
You'll do great!

ZOE
(TO RUTH)

**SOUND: A SLIGHT HESITATION BEFORE,
TIMIDLY, RUTH GOES.**

SCENE 5

(INT. - THE BLACK ROOM. AS RUTH ENTERS, SOUND BECOMES... ISOLATED? EXAGGERATED? THE ROOM IS ALMOST SELF-AWARE. IT SOUNDS FULL.)

SOUND: HARRIET BEGINS TO SWING THE DOOR SHUT.

RUTH

Wait! You can't close it yet. I can't see.

HARRIET

That's the point, dear. Go take a seat and lie down.

RUTH

I won't be able to see my hand in front of my face. You expect me to find my way to an empty spot without stepping on someone?

HARRIET

(SIGHS)

Fine. Go quickly.

SOUND: RUTH PICKS HER WAY THROUGH, TRYING TO FIND AN EMPTY SPOT, BUT TREADS ON SOMEONE'S HAND.

MEDITATOR

Ow!

RUTH

Oh,- sorry!

SOUND: RUTH KEEPS GOING, MORE GINGERLY THIS TIME.

HARRIET

(TO THE ROOM AT LARGE)

Lay down where you can. If you can feel someone else's body heat, you're too close. You want to be alone with yourself.

SOUND: RUTH LAYS IN AN EMPTY SPOT AND EXHALES SLOWLY.

RUTH

(TO HERSELF, VERY QUIETLY)

Oh, calm down, calm down, calm down. You're doing this for Dori. Dori needs you. You promised Will. *Dori* needs you.

RUTH (NARRATING)

I tried to catch a last glimpse of Zoe to — I don't know, make sure she wasn't cackling to herself — only to watch as, at the last second, she stopped an assistant from shutting the door and slipped inside. That was the room's last crack of light. After that...

SOUND: THE DOOR SHUTS HEAVILY. A LOW, LOUD BUZZ OF WHITE NOISE (INUNIVERSE, ORIGINATING FROM SPEAKERS) KICKS IN.

HARRIET

Become comfortable. You are not going to move until the session is over. You do not have bodily needs anymore. You don't even need to breathe. Let the body do the body's work while the mind... extends.

SOUND: BUZZING. ONLY BUZZING FOR A HARD MOMENT. THEN, AN EXPERIENCE TAKES OVER. THE SONG THAT PLAYED ON THE RADIO THE FIRST TIME RUTH AND WILL DUG A GRAVE TOGETHER STARTS TO PLAY.

WILL (MEMORY)

When you get the chance to run, you take it.

YOUNG WILL (MEMORY)

If people start to need you around, you won't ever be able to leave.

RUTH (NARRATING)

The room was void. Even the ground felt neither cold nor warm... simply there, barely. I was... tetherless.

**SOUND HALLUCINATION: THE
ENGINE OF RUTH'S CAR AS SHE
DRIVES AND DRIVES.**

RUTH (MEMORY)

“Begin, and cease, and then again begin...
With tremulous cadence slow. And bring
The eternal note of sadness in.”

HENRY (MEMORY)

Get back here! Where are you going?

RUTH (MEMORY)

Nowhere, just like you said!

HENRY (MEMORY)

At least you know it!

SOUND HALLUCINATION: DIGGING.

DORIAN (MEMORY)

Besides, now that you and Will are friends again, you and I are
gonna be hanging out all the time!

DORIAN (MEMORY)

Please! Kiss me!

WILL (MEMORY)

I-I...

RUTH (MEMORY)

If you can't, I will!

**SOUND: RUTH YANKS DORIAN INTO A
KISS.**

DORIAN (MEMORY)

Are you interested?

RUTH

(MEMORY) Maybe...

RUTH (MEMORY)

Hey, if he poisoned everything he touched, what does that mean for me?

**SOUND HALLUCINATION: HENRY,
LAUGHING HARD.**

MARGARET (MEMORY)

I hope you'll come back soon.

RUTH (MEMORY)

S-Stay here?

**SOUND HALLUCINATION: THE CAR STOPS
DRIVING. THE DIGGING STOPS.
EVERYTHING INTERNAL FADES. WE
ARE LEFT WITH ONLY THE BUZZING.**

RUTH (NARRATING)

I saw color. Swirling blooms of it, chasing itself over my eyes like dragonflies skirting atop a pond. im blinking, but it goes nowhere, because blinking was nothing.

DORIAN (MEMORY)

Ruth, come join us. I need to cuddle.

RUTH (MEMORY)

You have a *boyfriend* for that.

DORIAN (MEMORY)

Well, maybe I want you both.

RUTH (NARRATING)

(CONT'D) It all resolved into two colors. Just two.

**SOUND: RUTH TRIES TO BREATHE
EVENLY.**

RUTH (NARRATING)

I hate this. I'm digging my nails into my palms to keep myself in my body.

God, how long had we been trapped inside this room trapped inside our problems?

But its just a room. That was the thing that I had to remind myself: every place is a definite place, and I am in my definite place. I am right here. (MOSTLY CALM)

Of course, as soon as I tried to convince myself of that, then I see it. I see myself laying in a black room with a hundred bodies dead beside me. Me, just staying there, naively trusting the dark.

(FINALLY STARTING TO PANIC)

I didn't know where the door is, let alone how to open it if I got there. What if it is locked? What if these freaks pumped gas on us? What if they drugged m——?!

SOUND: A WOMAN STARTS SCREAMING.

RUTH

(BARELY AUDIBLE) It's not real. It's not real. It's not real.

RUTH (NARRATING)

Zoe. Zoe. She is being dragged out, two handlers cutting a path through the eerily still bodies on the floor who fight not to be disturbed.

SOUND: ZOE SCREAMS, THRASHING AS TWO HANDLERS PULL HER OUT OF THE ROOM. RUTH SHOOTS TO HER FEET AND SPRINTS FOR THE DOOR.

MEDITATOR #2

Watch it!

SOUND: HARRIET GRABS RUTH AT THE DOOR.

HARRIET

Get back in your spot, troublemaker.

RUTH

I bet I can scream louder.

**SOUND: HARRIET HUFFS AND LETS GO.
WE FOLLOW RUTH OUT INTO THE
HALLWAY**

ZOE

Ruth! Ruth, what are you doing?!

RUTH

Let me through!

ZOE

You have to get back inside! Prove yourself! There are nonbelievers here! They want to destroy our chance at Paradise! Don't get left behind!

**SOUND: THE HANDLERS REACH THE
MAIN DOOR AND ESCORT ZOE OUT.**

ZOE

Please... We have to tell someone! We have to tell Ned!

**SOUND: RUTH, BREATHS
HEAVING,
CATCHES THE DOOR BEFORE IT SHUTS,
STANDING ON THE CUSP OF A
BEAUTIFUL OUTSIDE WORLD. SHE
TAKES OUT HER RADIO AND DIALS. IT
RINGS OUT.**

RUTH

**Hey, so if you're okay, I really need you to radio me back. I just sat for... *almost two hours?* (DEEP BREATH)
...in a screwed-up prayer room, and I watched a screaming woman get dragged out — literally dragged — and... whatever ceremony these people are talking about is happening today. I don't know what part Dorian has in it, but she's basically under house arrest and I think they took his radio. I need to talk to you or I might lose it.**

SCENE 6

(INT. - DORIAN'S ROOM, LATE AFTERNOON. PAULETTE PREPARING DORIAN FOR THE CEREMONY.)

SOUND: PAULETTE RUNS A SEWING MACHINE WHILE DORIAN DRUMS HIS FINGERS ON HIS DESK.

DORI

I promise you don't need to go to all that trouble.

PAULETTE

Well, I've already started, so I might as well finish. Yes, I think these will look respectable.

DORI

Are you sure we can't tell Ruth?

PAULETTE

Yes.

DORI

Then why let her stay?

PAULETTE

She'll see come ceremony time why this is so important to us. If I can't get through to her, Yuri should be able to.

DORI

And if neither of you can? You're trusting her with a pretty big secret. No other outsider knows I'm going to die.

SOUND: THE SEWING MACHINE STOPS.

PAULETT

No other outsider?

DORI

(SIGHS)

I told you, Mama. Will and I were talking about *him* last night. He wanted to tell me about how he used to dig graves.

PAULETTE

But why should that affect you, Dori? So badly that you faint.

DORI

Because I was lying to him! He didn't have other friends, and every time we were in the same room, I let him think I was normal — because *you* told me to blend in. I didn't think about how badly it might hurt for him to lose me.

PAULETTE

If he's worthy, you'll see him again.

DORI

Just because things will *probably* be okay in the end doesn't mean I can keep hurting the people around me!

PAULETTE

Well then what about me, Dorian? After everything I've done for you — raising you, teaching you, re-building this house for you and clothing you, flaunting you around in public every time Ned asked. I put my entire reputation on the line defending your right to this ceremony, and ever since you left home, you have done nothing but throw that trust back in my face!

DORI

I didn't want to go!

PAULETTE

Dorian Charles, do not raise your voice at me!

SOUND: SHE TAKES A DEEP BREATH IN OTHERWISE TENSE SILENCE.

PAULETTE (CONT'D)

(COOLER, BUT NOT MUCH)

This is what the outside world does. It turns us against each other. I hope it's a sign of *more* faith in you, that you're so easily damaged by it. But I don't know how to get through to you if

you won't listen. If you are not filled to your marrow with faith on that cliff tonight, do you know what will happen? You will die. That's all. And we'll be left a stranded, fearful town patiently waiting for a saviour who will never come. And I will lose my child. Do you think that's what I want? I would never, ever hurt my baby.

DORIAN

I didn't think it would hurt this bad.

PAULETTE

The world hurts. That's what we tried to keep you from. That's what you get to fix.

**SOUND: A KNOCK FROM OUT IN
THE
HALL. PAULETTE ANSWERS THE
DOOR.**

PAULETTE

Ruth! Did you walk all the way from the village again? Nevermind, it's good that you're here. I think the girls and I were about to make a brief appearance down at the village. Now we don't have to leave Dorian alone.

RUTH

I'll stay. Of course.

PAULETTE

Thank you, dear. I'll be back soon, Dori. You stay put and think hard on what I said.

Ruth, maybe you could touch up Dori's face. That would be nice. See you two soon.

SOUND: PAULETTE EXITS.

RUTH

So, you're too fragile to go into town and see some neighbours, but you can participate in mysterious church ceremonies?

DORIAN

Why do you look so terrible?

RUTH
(HUFFS A LAUGH) You ever been in
the black room?

DORIAN
Oh my god. No, you're not ready for that. Who brought you
there?

RUTH
Doesn't matter. What *does* matter is whether or not Will was
right to worry about you over the past couple days.

DORIAN
Why didn't you leave with him?

(BEAT.)

RUTH
(DEEPLY SCARED)
Look, I'm only going to ask this once so you can tell me I'm
being stupid... Are you sure Will left?

DORIAN
You haven't talked to him?

RUTH
I've tried. He hasn't been answering. I gave him my car. He
definitely would have gotten home, right?

DORI
I don't know.

RUTH
What do you mean you don't know?!

DORIAN
I don't know! I'm sure — I'm sure they wouldn't hurt him...

RUTH
Dorian, talk fast.

DORIAN

They might not have brought him home right away. They might wait until the weekend is over.

RUTH

Why would they do that? I mean, Ned offered to get him home, and you trust these people. You brought us here. Why would—
—

DORIAN

—Look, Ned's nice, but he wouldn't want anybody who might know what's happening this weekend to leave... Not until it's over.

RUTH

What is happening this weekend?

(BEAT.)

DORIAN

I'm going to die.

(BEAT.)

Is that a joke?

DORIAN

(RAMBLING)

No. It was supposed to happen a few weeks from now — well, actually, it was supposed to happen months ago, but then the first of the non-believers arose and Ned said there was a flaw in our calendar, so we put it off. But then my spirit drifted at school, so I can't go back and we're moving forward with the ceremony before it's too late. It doesn't makes sense, right?!

Rules are rules, and you can't change them just because you want to be right. So if you say things have to be one way, but then you go back on it as soon as someone does something you don't like, then... you're obviously lying. Right?

RUTH

Fuck, Dorian, slow down. What do you mean you're going to die? And you told Will?!

DORIAN

No, I didn't get the chance, so he *should* be fine. And, I'm not going to "die" — I mean, my physical body will be destroyed, but it's keeping me from being able to navigate the spiritual plane and find Paradise.

See, everyone has a door they'll step through once they leave their body, but I'll be able to unlock every door now and create a bridge for everyone who will ever be worthy; I'll end mortal suffering. I *wanted* to tell you both, but outsiders learning our secrets is dangerous because they think we're—

RUTH

—Stop. I'm trying to be gentle. Do you... genuinely believe what you're saying?

DORIAN

...what do you think?

RUTH

Try your absolute best to listen because if what you're saying is true, we don't have time for me to be gentle: Dorian, if a spiritual plane with a convenient door to "Paradise" existed, don't you think more people would know about it?

DORIAN

No! All the clues to its existence are hidden through history and different cultures—

RUTH

—No. No, Dorian, you do not have the secret key to a magical happy life hidden somewhere in this random village.

DORIAN

Technically, I *am* the key—

RUTH

—Dori! Remember what I said? I'm trying to say this as carefully as I can, but I'm not Will! No one knows where Will is! This is a cult!

(BEAT.)

DORIAN

Well, that's rude.

RUTH

(LAUGHS INCREDULOUSLY)

They are lying to you, brainwashing you, and I'd like you to please leave with me right now so you don't die today.

DORIAN

I know they've been lying about *some* things, but they can't lie about everything!

RUTH

Why not? *You* have!

DORIAN

Ruth, I didn't lie to you, I swear——!

RUTH

——You did. But it's okay. It has to be because if it's not, then I'm about to lose you completely, forever.

DORIAN

I'm right here. I'd never hurt you Ruth.

RUTH

Then, think. Think about how they've treated you. Will saw it! Where were you all day Friday? Why is your mother able to keep you sitting up here believing you're sick when you are fine?!

DORIAN

Well, okay, I'm definitely more aware about certain unfair strictness than I was before I came to school, but it's not——
(CLICK. CONFUSION.) Wait, is that what you——

RUTH

——Yeah. They don't want you to go back to school because you're learning what life is like in the *real world* where none of this is true.

DORIAN

Wait. No. If they know it's not real, they wouldn't believe it. So it has to be.

RUTH

Unless making you believe it means you would always follow them. Fuck, and I was right there with you!

DORIAN

But why would they want me to die if they know it's not real?

RUTH

It's scary that you can say that so calmly.

DORIAN

Well, I volunteered to be thrown off a cliff at the age of five.

RUTH

Thrown off a——?!

(CALMING BREATH)

There is no time. Bottom line: things get so easy when people tell you everything is going to be okay——

**SOUND: THE DOOR WRENCHES
OPEN. EVELYN STRIDES IN. A BEAT
OF CUTTING SILENCE.**

DORIAN

What are you doing here?

EVELYN

We heard you were left alone. Now, don't let me interrupt your conversation. I'm only here in case Dorian needs anything.

DORIAN

In that case... maybe you could... wait downstairs?

EVELYN

I have a better idea. Why doesn't your friend head off to the celebration, and I'll help you put the final touches together for your part?

DORIAN

Um... Ruth?

RUTH

He needs friends nearby! I can help—

EVELYN

—You may be his friend, but you're not special.

DORIAN

Actually, Ruth, you should go. We still don't know if Will's awake. See if he's radioed back, okay?

(BEAT.)

RUTH

Is that the best thing for me to do?

DORIAN

I'm fine here.

EVELYN

Yes, Ruth. He's fine here. Goodbye.

**SOUND: EVELYN "GUIDES" RUTH TO
THE DOOR.**

RUTH

(TO DORIAN)

Hey! He wanted me to tell you something.

EVELYN (WITHIN)

That's enough.

RUTH

He wanted me to tell you: If you get the chance to run, take it!

**SOUND: EVELYN WRENCHES
OPEN THE
SOUND: DOOR AND GRABS RUTH
BY THE WRIST.**

EVELYN

You want to challenge us? I'd like to see you try!

**SOUND: DORIAN LEAPS UP TO
HELP.**

DORIAN

Don't hurt her!

RUTH

Let go!

**SOUND: RUTH'S FOOT SLIPS. SHE
CRIES OUT; DORIAN CATCHES HER
AND PULLS HER BACK FROM THE
STAIRS.**

**SOUND: EVELYN HAS PULLED OUT A
RADIO.**

EVELYN

**(INTO RADIO) Get upstairs *now*.
Bring ties. We have a non-believer to
deal with.**

DORIAN

No! Ruth's just trying to help! She doesn't understand!

EVELYN

**Then, until she does, we need to put her somewhere safe —
somewhere that she cannot jeopardize your commitment.**

RUTH

The same place you took Will?

EVELYN

(SMILING)

Perhaps.

DORIAN

**If you touch her — if you don't bring Will home right now —
I won't jump.**

EVELYN

If you don't jump, they don't go free. With what they've seen, the only thing that's saving either of your friends now is *you opening that door.*

SOUND: A GUARD'S BOOTS THUNK UP THE STAIRS.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Grab the outsider. I'll handle Dorian.

SOUND: THE GUARD ATTEMPTS TO GRAB RUTH. SHE BACKS OFF.

RUTH

Don't touch me!

EVELYN

I would go quietly if I were you. You don't know *where* we have your friend. One call on this radio and it won't matter. Understand?

FENCE GUARD

Hands out front, Miss. Come quiet.

SOUND: FENCE GUARD TIES HER HANDS.

SCENE 7

(INT. - THE BASEMENT, AFTERNOON/EVENING. IN ONE CORNER, ZOE AND CARLOS MURMUR TO EACH OTHER. OTHERWISE, THE ROOM IS FILLED WITH QUIET EXHAUSTION.)

ZOE

I don't know what happened. I don't know how I could end up here. All I have *ever* wanted to do is show my faith...

CARLOS

It's alright. You're not alone.

ZOE

If I could talk to them, explain... I'm missing the ceremony!

CARLOS

Zoe, you need to worry about yourself now. No one is coming.

**SOUND: A CRASH UPSTAIRS. THE
NONBELIEVERS PERK UP.**

ZOE

What was that?

**SOUND: ANOTHER CRASH. A FIGHT.
THEN, THE DOOR OPENS.**

RUTH

(LOWLY)

Abandoned strawberry fields... Are we idiots?

(NORMAL)

Will? Please be down here. Hello?

**SOUND: RUTH TENTATIVELY
DESCENDS A FEW STAIRS.**

RUTH (CONT'D)

Oh my God. What is...?

(BEAT.)

CARLOS

Help us, we're tied up.

RUTH

Oh my God.

**SOUND: SHE HURRIES THE REST OF
THE WAY DOWN.**

RUTH

Zoe? This is where they dragged you?!

ZOE

Ruth, they said I broke the rules...

RUTH

Give me your hands. I'll untie you, then you can help me untie everyone else.

SOUND: ZOE DOESN'T MOVE. RUTH SIGHS AND STARTS UNDOING STRAPS. NON-BELIEVERS SIGH IN RELIEF AND STIR.

ZOE

What are you doing? Stop that! This is a place for nonbelievers!

RUTH

Don't be ridiculous. You've been trapped down here.

SOUND: ZOE RACES UP THE STAIRS, SLAMS THE DOOR SHUT, AND LOCKS IT.

ZOE (OFF)

Nobody leaves! No matter what, we can't risk ruining the ceremony!

SCENE 8

(INT. - EVELYN'S CAR, APPROACHING DUSK. EVELYN HAS DRIVEN DORI HIGH UP THE MOUNTAIN, ALMOST TO THE CLIFF.)

EVELYN

The faithful have gathered to observe. Ned is waiting for you.

DORIAN

Where's my family?

EVELYN

N I just told you.

DORIAN

Where is my family?

EVELYN

They're waiting for you to keep your word. Same as your friends. Others might be lenient with you because of your position, but / have a job to do. If you want your outsider pets to be safe, you will do exactly as I say.

SOUND: THEY EXIT THE CAR. DORIAN STUMBLES A LITTLE WITH HIS FOOTING. WE CAN HEAR A CROWD NEARBY.

EVELYN

Watch it!

DORIAN

These clothes are heavy...

EVELYN

I don't care. Walk.

SCENE 9

(INT. - BASEMENT. RUTH POUNDS ON THE LOCKED DOOR.)

RUTH

Zoe! Zoe, open the door!

ZOE (OFF)

I can't do that.

RUTH

So, what, you're going to sit there forever?

ZOE (OFF)

Until the end of the ceremony! Until sundown. That way, nobody jeopardizes the future that was foretold. They'll know I'm loyal then...

RUTH

***This* is how you're going to buy your way to Paradise?**

ZOE (OFF)

Yes! I am worthy of a world that's perfect!

RUTH

But you know... if that happens, we'll all die. You'd be abandoning us if you disappeared. We'll starve, die of thirst...

(BEAT.)

ZOE (OFF)

No. That wouldn't be my fault.

RUTH

Why not? The basement was open. You locked it. How do you know it wasn't *my* destiny to come here now, I mean, you saw the people down here. They can barely stand upright, you think they could make it all the way to the — uh — cliffs? Where it's happening? ...Zoe?

ZOE (OFF)

I have to let the guards out out.

RUTH

(PANICKED)

Zoe! Wait! They'll make sure we never get out. They want us to die. But you understand kindness, right, like Dorian taught? Mercy? Our fate is in your hands right now.

ZOE (OFF)

Then... Then I'll wait until *my* door opens, and I'll let you out just before I leave.

RUTH

That's a pretty big gamble. What if the door isn't exactly a door? What if you don't have control over how you go?

ZOE

You don't know what you're talking about, Ruth.

SOUND: CARLOS THINKS UP THE STAIRS BEHIND RUTH.

CARLOS

But I do. It could be many months before Dorian returns for the faithful, Zoe. You can't keep sentinel all that time. Sooner or later, those in charge will come, and they will take control. They might not be as merciful as you.

ZOE (OFF)

You deserve it! Whatever fate befalls you, you deserve it!

CARLOS

Then you be the one to walk away. If you truly believe all these people you've known for years are evil at heart, then your conscience should be clear if you abandon us.

(ANOTHER BEAT.)

ZOE (OFF)

But freeing you would be a true betrayal.

CARLOS

They have already decided what they will do with you. Let us out. Come with us.

RUTH

(LOWLY)

Keep going. I'm going to go release the others.

**SOUND: SHE CREEPS BACK FROM
THE DOOR.**

ZOE (OFF)

Where will you go?

CARLOS

I imagine everyone wants to leave the village — peacefully. We've all seen enough pain without wanting to cause more.

ZOE (OFF)

What could think is waiting for you out there? You won't have your family, your faith, your home...

CARLOS

We'll have our freedom. Please, Zoe. Lets go.

**SOUND: THE LOCK CLICKS. THE DOOR
OPENS.**

ZOE

I don't think I can go with you...

CARLOS

Of course you can.

**SOUND: NON-BELIEVERS START
TO CLIMB THE STAIRS AND EXIT
THE BASEMENT.**

NON-BELIEVER

The sun...

NON-BELIEVER #2

How do we leave?

RUTH

There are a couple of cars parked outside the building. Some of them have keys inside. Just don't take the red rust bucket. That one's mine.

**SOUND: RUTH STOPS BESIDE
CARLOS.**

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Thank you...?

RUTH

I'm looking for a guy my age. His name is Will, he went missing yester——

CARLOS

——Yes, he was brought here, but Maxine took him to the graveyard.

RUTH

How far is it?

CARLOS

I can show you the way if you help me to your car. It's my legs...

RUTH

Thank you. Zoe, are you coming?

ZOE

No. Not with you. If I don't go now, I never will.

RUTH

Okay. Good luck.

SCENE 10

(INT. - EVENING, RUTH'S CAR. RUTH HELPS CARLOS CLIMB IN AS OTHER CARS DRIVE OFF.)

CARLOS

Is it true there is a fence around the village now?

RUTH

Yeah, but it's one guard against, like, four cars. They should be able to get out fine.

**SOUND: SHE CIRCLES AROUND,
GETS IN ON HER SIDE.**

**SOUND: RUTH STARTS
DRIVING.**

RUTH

(CLEARS THROAT)

Okay, if you're here to help, then we need to get Will and crash this ceremony fast. Where are we going?

CARLOS

South. You don't need to follow the road. Once you're over the hill, make for that little break in the trees.

**SOUND: RUTH DOES. A
BEAT.**

RUTH

So... Who are you? What happened? How'd you end up down in that basement?

CARLOS

My name is Carlos. I was a prophet.

RUT

A "prophet"?

CARLOS

Yes. It was my duty, alongside a handful of other ordinary people, to predict the future.

Or, if we could not predict it, to force it to come to pass. And we convinced ourselves we could. You want to shift right.

**SOUND: STUNNED, RUTH ADJUSTS HER
STEERING WHEEL.**

RUTH

That sounds... like an important Job.

CARLOS

Oh, yes, extremely.

RUTH

Then, how——?

CARLOS

Ned caught me radioing outside the village for help. I'd become remorseful —— When they caught me, I begged to leave, but that was never going to happen. As I understand it, they've had to work quite hard to keep outside authorities from following up on my call.

RUTH

Really? I've been... close... with Dorian's family. They haven't said anything like that.

CARLOS

No, they wouldn't.

(RE-CENTERING SLIGHTLY)

You're turning off. It should snake around, and you'll see a fence.

SOUND: THE CAR LOSES SOME SPEED...

RUT

I think this is it.

CARLOS

Yes. You'll want to go slowly from here.

SCENE 11

(EXT. - DUSK. WOODS/GRAVEYARD. WILL DIGS, EXHAUSTED WHILE MAXINE SUPERVISES.)

MAXINE

Is this how you respect your departed?

(BEAT.)

You must have seen many people die, and yet you let your corners get shabby.

SOUND: MORE AGGRESSIVE SHOVEL PLUNGES.

MAXINE (CONT'D)

That's more like it. Take some water.

SOUND: SHE DROPS A CANTEEN INTO A GRAVE. WILL SNATCHES IT UP AND DRINKS. DIGGING DOES NOT RESUME.

MAXINE (CONT'D)

Do you think you're done?

(BEAT.)

**WILL
(PANTING)**

Why are there three?

MAXINE

I don't suppose anyone would want to *share*.

WILL

But why *three*?

MAXINE

Just in case. Finish the last. Then, lie back in it for all I care.

SOUND: AN ENGINE REVS.

MAXINE (CONT'D)

What the...?

**SOUND: WILL KNOCKS MAXINE
DOWN WITH A SHOVEL. THE TRUCK
PULLS UP AND RUTH OPENS THE
DOOR**

RUTH

Quick, get in the car! Before she climbs out!

**SOUND: WILL COLLAPSES,
TOO.**

RUTH (CONT'D)

Will!

SOUND: SHE DASHES UP TO HIS GRAVE.

RUTH (CONT'D)

**Will, are you okay! Come on. You've got to get up. We need to
get Dori and leave!**

**SOUND: WILL EXHALES. SHIFTS
SLIGHTLY. SAGS.**

WILL

Ruth...

SOUND: RUTH JUMPS DOWN TO HELP HIM.

RUTH

It's alright, I'm here. Lean on me. Reach, and I'll push.

**SOUND: RUTH GETS WILL TO HIS FEET,
BOOSTS HIM UP.**

RUTH

That's it... Come on, pull...

**SOUND: WILL MAKES IT OVER, FINALLY.
RUTH CLIMBS OUT AFTER HIM.**

**SOUND: MAXINE STANDS, FREE OF HER
GRAVE, AND AIMS THE GUN.**

MAXINE

You won't be able to save--

**SOUND: RUTH LUNGES AT MAXINE
AND KNOCKING HER BACK**

RUTH (CONT'D)

Will, get in!

**SOUND: CARLOS JUMPS FROM THE CAR
AND OPENS WILL'S DOOR, HELPS HIM
STAGGER IN.**

CARLOS

He's in. Ruth——!

**SOUND: GUNSHOTS. A LITTANY OF
THEM. MAXINE SCREAMS, ENRAGED.**

MAXINE

You won't make it. We will reach Paradise.

SCENE 12

(EXT. - THE CLIFFS, DUSK, WAVES CRASHING BELOW. A MONUMENTAL CROWD HAS ASSEMBLED ALL ALONG THE SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN. DORIAN WAITS CLOSE BY, STILL IN THE FOREST, STILL GUARDED BY EVELYN.)

NED

There she is. My jewel of this church, my mortal key. Are you ready, Miss Dori?

DORIAN

I...

NED

Once you reach the spiritual plane, you will remember your purpose. It will be easy. All you have to do now is wait for me to call you over. Can you do that?

(BEAT.)

EVELYN

I'll make sure of it.

NED

Then, it's time.

NED EXITS THE FOREST. THE MOUNTAIN ERUPTS INTO CHEERS AS HE STRIDES OVER THE CLIFF, THOUGH WE STICK WITH DORIAN. HUSH SETTLES.

NED (OFF)

Good evening, family.

SOUND: AGAIN, IMMENSE APPLAUSE.

NED (OFF) (CONT'D) (INTO THE RETURNED SILENCE.)

Thank you. I appreciate it. Thank you.

What an occasion! Each of us, as individuals — we have all put in the work to reach this day, and none more so than the first person to promise its coming so many years ago.

SOUND: RAUCOUS CHEERS.

NED (OFF) (CONT'D)

Before we welcome our guest of honor, whom you all know and love, and have had a hand in raising these past eighteen years... I would like to invite another very special person to come forth.

SOUND: A PAUSE IN THE SPEECH. DORI TRIES TO CATCH HER BREATH.

PAULETTE

(OFF) I rarely make these addresses myself.

SOUND: DORI GASPS.

PAULETTE (OFF) (CONT'D)

My pride has never been in recognition, but in security. For me, personal knowledge of a job well done is the only motivation. I thought when I became a mother I would face the normal feelings of turmoil — fear, guilt, elation. And I did. But what I did not know was how much more would come to be expected of me.

I could never have predicted who my child would turn out to be. I never dreamed that my flesh and blood could not only build a movement, but assume a legend. We are here today because of a promise made by a blessed child. "There is a reward out there for your faith. I will prove it." I, too, have made you this promise: his faith is strong.

If you've met Dorian even once, you've felt that conviction. I wish I could adequately convey it with words.

It is the strongest I have ever seen. It is stronger even than he knows. And I know that through him, we will see at least one, if not all doors open to Paradise before our very eyes tonight.

SOUND: EAGER MURMURS, BUILDING TALK.

DORIAN

What is she saying? I don't know how long it will take! No one does! That's the point of waiting for my return!

**NED (OFF)
(RESERVED)**

Isn't that a wonderful thought? Who can say what the future will hold? Thank you, Paulette, for those beautiful words. Why don't you stand by me. As for the rest of you, my family... Are you ready witnesses?

**SOUND: MORE, LOUDER
CHEERS.**

**EVELYN
Get ready. No stumbling.**

**NED (OFF)
Then I ask my good friend Dorian — will you walk with me?**

**SOUND: DORIAN EMERGES
FROM THE
TREES TO WILD APPLAUSE AND
HALTINGLY WALKS TOWARD THE
CLIFF'S EDGE.**

**NED (CONT'D)
(SOFTLY)
See? You made it.**

**DORIAN
Mama.**

**PAULETTE
I'm so proud of you, baby. You *are* this church.**

**DORIAN
...Will they want me to speak? I didn't prepare any words.**

**NED
I can speak for you. You've done enough. This is your moment.**

SOUND: RUTH'S CAR PULLS UP OUT OF THE FOREST. ITS PASSENGER DOOR FLINGS OPEN.

RUTH
Dorian! You don't have to do this!

**SOUND: GASPS.
BUBBLING
DISSENT/OUTRAGE.**

DORIAN
(ELATED)
What is she doing?

RUTH
Dori! *This* is your chance!
(TO CROWD)
Back off, I've got a shovel!

NED
Someone! Grab her! (ROUNDING ON DORIAN)
And you! You know what needs to be done.

DORIAN
I — I —

PAULETTE
—You will not fail!

**SOUND: A SUDDEN SHOVE BY PAULETTE;
A MOMENT'S TEETERING — AND
DORIAN FALLS OVER THE CLIFF'S
EDGE.**

[MUSIC]

ANNOUNCER

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This series is written and created by J Evelyn Gaskell and Directed by Micah Rodriguez and Stephanie Resendes. This episode was edited by Lowri Ann Davies, Nico Vettese, Meg McKellar, and Catherine Rinella. With Music from Sam Jones.

It featured Ian RQ Slater as Dori/Dorian, Phi Nelson as Will, Victoria Cheng as Ruth, Isabel Kruse as Paulette, KT Thomas as Ned, Lisa Stanley as Evelyn, Lisa Pengov as Maxine, and Tori Thomson as Margaret. A full list of performance credits is available in the shownotes.

Neon Inkwell is produced by April Sumner with Executive Producer Alexander J Newall and Showrunner Elizabeth Moffatt.

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Neon Inkwell: The Pit Below Paradise 6 – A Celebration

The day of ceremony arrives, Dorian is more unsure and Ruth must make a choice.

This show contains recurring themes including:

- Religious Trauma/Indoctrination
- Family Conflict
- Gaslighting
- Childhood Trauma
- Child Neglect/Abuse
- Alcoholism
- Toxic/Unhealthy Relationships

Transcripts: <https://shorturl.at/pJQV7>

Showrunner Elizabeth Moffatt

Directed by Micah Rodriguez and Stephanie Resendes

Written by J Evelyn Gaskell

Produced by April Sumner

Executive Producers Alexander J Newall & April Sumner

Featuring

Victoria Chen as Ruth

Sergio Salas as Yuri

Isabel Kruse as Paulette

Ian RQ Slater as Dori/Dorian

Hannah Preisinger as Zoe

Gigi Guizado as Harriet

Lisa Stanley as Evelyn

Alexander Bryan as Fence Guard

Neil Strawder as Carlos

Lisa Pengov as Maxine

Phi Hamens as Will

KT Thomas as Ned

Meg McKellar as Parishioner

Jenna Krasowski as Non-Believer 1

Paul Kandarian as Non-Believer 2

Dialogue Editor – Lowri Ann Davies and Nico Vettese
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