

MAURICE

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Based on the novel by E.M. Forster

A group of young schoolboys in formal uniform are led by two teachers. One of them, MR. DUCIE, 40, walks down through the marram grass hills of the English beach. Kites fly to the side into the cloudy sky above.

Two boys and their father fly the kites against the strong wind on top of a sand hill.

TITLES: MAURICE // FROM THE NOVEL BY E.M. FORSTER

MR. DUCIE reaches the top of the sand hill, his students in tow. The father tips his hat to them. MR. DUCIE holds two of his students by the hand. Students can be heard chattering around them. The students by MR. DUCIE's side each hand him an *umbrella* and *book*. The schoolboys all have bags slung to their bodies, while some carry nets.

A SCHOOLBOY, 11, takes the flat cap from MAURICE HALL, 11, and runs down the hill.

MAURICE follows close, the boy trips, MAURICE catches him, then takes his flat cap back. He slaps the boy's shoulder.

Close on MAURICE, he looks down at the boy.

MAURICE
(annoyed)
Thank you.

MAURICE walks away, dusting off his hat.

MR. DUCIE climbs another sand hill, using his umbrella as a cane, and admires the view. The two kites are flying further away. He turns and calls:

MR. DUCIE
Hall, come here please.

On MAURICE, who turns and walks to him, putting his flat hat on.

MAURICE's voice comes from behind the hill.

MAURICE
Sir?

MAURICE reaches the top and stands beside Mr. Ducie.

MR. DUCIE
Come on.

MR. DUCIE beckons MAURICE along. He waits for Maurice.

MR. DUCIE (CONT'D)
Have a good send-off?

They begin a walk through the sand hills.

MAURICE
Yes sir, thank you sir. Mr.
Abrahams gave me a picture, The
Light of the World. The fellas have
given me a set of *Guatemalas*. Up to
two dollars! The ones with the
parrot and the pillar on.

MAURICE's tone is young and eager as he lists his gifts.
Maurice halts, then reaches into his pocket.

MAURICE (CONT'D)
Look sir.

MR. DUCIE turns to see the small picture of The Light of the
World. MAURICE hands it to him, and the teacher puts it up to
the light.

MR. DUCIE
Oh, splendid, splendid.

MR. DUCIE takes a closer look, then returns the picture.

MR. DUCIE (CONT'D)
And, um, what did Mr. Abrahams say
to you? Told you you were a
miserable sinner, I hope.

MR. DUCIE resumes the walk.

MAURICE laughs.

MAURICE
Mr. Abrahams said I'm never to do
anything I'd be ashamed to do in
front of my mother.

MR. DUCIE stops and looks at MAURICE.

MAURICE (CONT'D)
He said my next school will be more
like the world.

MR. DUCIE
(thoughtful)
Did he, did he?

MR. DUCIE resumes walking.

MR. DUCIE (CONT'D)
And what's the world *like*, do you
suppose?

MAURICE
(amused)
Don't know, sir. I'm a boy.

2

EXT. WINDSWEPT BEACH IN ENGLAND [1901] - DAY

2

MAURICE and MR. DUCIE walk closer to the empty shore, nothing
but flat sand and ocean behind them on that cloudy day.

MR. DUCIE
Do you, um, have any older
brothers, Hall?

MAURICE shakes his head no.

MAURICE
No, sir, only Kitty and Ada.
They're my sisters, sir.

MR. DUCIE
No uncles?

MAURICE shakes his head no again.

MAURICE
No, sir. There's Dr. Barry. He knew
my father before he died.

MR. DUCIE seems to want to get to something.

MR. DUCIE
So you don't really know a great
many grown-up fellows?

MAURICE
No, not really sir. Mother keeps a
coachman, and George for the
garden. But of course, you mean
gentlemen.

MR. DUCIE
Hall, I'm going to talk to you for
a few moments as if I were your
father. It isn't anything your
mother could say. Do you, do you
see?

MAURICE stops as he realizes the weight of their conversation. MR. DUCIE stops as well and faces MAURICE with a sober look.

MR. DUCIE (CONT'D)

Your body, is about to experience various changes-- physical changes. Now, Mr. Abrahams has explained to you that in the beginning God created he, man, and woman. That the earth should be peopled abundantly--

MAURICE

Yes sir. Sir...

(beat)

What changes?

MR. DUCIE struggles to say. He turns to the sea, resuming their walk, now toward the water.

MR. DUCIE

I speak, Hall, of the sacred mystery of sex.

MR. DUCIE stops by the line in the shore where the waves ebb and looks at the view. Maurice stops too.

MR. DUCIE (CONT'D)

The act of procreation between a man and his wife.

A group of three ladies and a man make their way down the hills toward the shore in the distance, far from earshot.

MR. DUCIE (CONT'D)

The procreation indeed of all creeping things.

MR. DUCIE faces MAURICE, intent on communicating his lecture.

MR. DUCIE (CONT'D)

You will discover that your *membrum virilis*. That's latin from *vir*--

MAURICE

(eagerly)

'Vir,' sir, it means man, sir.

MR. DUCIE nods, proud.

MR. DUCIE

Very good, very good. Um, uh, look, this might be easier if I...

MR. DUCIE uses the ferrule in his umbrella to carve on the damp sand. MAURICE looks down and looks as MR. DUCIE draws. We are not able to see his drawing yet.

MR. DUCIE (CONT'D)
That, that, that, um, that thing.

MR. DUCIE points fervently at his drawing, struggling to explain further.

MR. DUCIE (CONT'D)
There, now, that will...

MR. DUCIE moves his arm away from himself, contorting it oddly, then brings his arm back.

MR. DUCIE (CONT'D)
Develop and grow larger. You see?

MAURICE looks at MR. DUCIE with a muted look, listening.

MR. DUCIE gestures to the sketched sand with his umbrella.

MR. DUCIE (CONT'D)
And when that happens, the man lies very, very close to his wife, and he puts his *membrum virilis* into her... vagina, thus. Then, in due course, she will bring forth his child. Seminiferous tubules...

MAURICE now looks around, worried the group of ladies will see the drawings now they've wandered closer.

MR. DUCIE (CONT'D)
Labia major and minor, ducts.
Vulva.

MR. DUCIE continues referencing his sand graph and MAURICE casts more quiet, nervous glances at the other party, but listens in polite silence.

MR. DUCIE (CONT'D)
That- that is the very crown of life, Hall.

MAURICE turns his attention DOWN to the sand, where we are able to see MR. DUCIE's sketch. It is a series of spirals, cleanly etched into the recognizable shapes of human genitals and the reproductive system. MR. DUCIE's ferrule lingers on the sketch as he continues his lecture.

MR. DUCIE (CONT'D)
God's wondrous purpose.

MR. DUCIE's attention is on MAURICE.

MR. DUCIE (CONT'D)
Your body is his temple. You must
never, ever *pollute* that temple.
And when, as one day I'm sure you
will, you fall in love and marry,
you will discover to serve and
protect a woman...

MR. DUCIE bends, at eye level with MAURICE now.

MR. DUCIE (CONT'D)
And have children by her, is *life's*
chiefest glory.

MAURICE nods obediently.

MAURICE
Yes, sir.

MAURICE and MR. DUCIE are cast by the massive ocean line
behind them, and the open sky of clouds lights their bodies,
small in comparison to the massive scene. They resume
walking.

MR. DUCIE
You must never, ever mention any of
this to your mother, or, or, or
indeed to any lady. And if at your
next school the fellows mention it,
just *shut* them up. Tell them you
know.

MAURICE
I think I shan't marry.

MR. DUCIE
What?

MR. DUCIE laughs out and wraps an arm around MAURICE.

MR. DUCIE (CONT'D)
(amused)
Look, um, in ten years to the day,
I invite you and your wife to dine
with me and my wife as our guests.
What do you say?

MAURICE
Oh, sir!

Mr. Ducie laughs again.

MR. DUCIE

Yes, it's a bargain then, is it?

Mr. Ducie skips over a rock, and walks, then stops suddenly and turns to look the way they came.

MR. DUCIE (CONT'D)

Oh, God, those infernal designs!

He begins a tentative run back to the sketches. Maurice calls to MR. DUCIE.

MAURICE

(loud)

Sir, won't they be all right? The tide will have covered them by now.

MR. DUCIE stops.

MR. DUCIE

(sighing)

Oh, yes, the rising tide. I only hope to God he's right, by God.

Further down the beach, the two ladies and man are led by a YOUNG GIRL who takes in the view from the shore. The YOUNG GIRL stops, standing over the abandoned sand sketches and analyzes them, tilting her head, confused. The ladies and man join her. One of the ladies gasps.

LADY #1

(horrified)

Oh! Come, Victoria, come!

The group walks away, and we see the SAND SKETCHES licked slowly by the rising tide, not yet erased by the water.

3

INT. DEAN CORNWALLIS' MEETING ROOM - EVENING

3

Cambridge University's courtyard is cast in blue evening light as we look out a French window to the people wandering below. We begin a SLOW PAN away from the view outside to the one inside, as the sound of cutlery places a formal gathering.

FETHERSTONHAUGH

(O.S.)

Wagner's utter rubbish. Fat woman with horns on their heads, singing at the tops of their voices about how happy they are to be dying? It's a horrible noise, and it's unhealthy.

RISLEY

(O.S.)

But music is about death. It always
has been.

TEXT: MICHAELMAS TERM • 1909 • CAMBRIDGE

FETHERSTONHAUGH

(O.S.)

I think he's trying to provoke us;
go on then, Risley. Enlighten us.

The room begins to form around our view. Dark velvet draped
curtains, panelled walls, richly-patterned settees and
chairs.

A blond man, we soon discover is MAURICE, 19, sits in one of
these chairs. His hair is smartly gelled back, his tweed suit
bespoke to his body, with his shoulders hunched forward. A
second man, CHAPMAN, 20, listens to the conversation. He
wears his napkin by the neck of his shirt.

MAURICE and CHAPMAN balance plates of food on their laps as
the debate continues over them.

RISLEY

(O.S.)

A superior mind wouldn't need
enlightening. Music is the highest
of the arts.

A stocky man, DEAN CORNWALLIS, 60, sits on another chair, he
wears his napkin on his lap, his hands folded, and his face
pensive as he chews. The SLOW PAN ENDS, we can see the room
now.

RISLEY (CONT'D)

(O.S.)

It needs no reference to the
figurative or the corporeal.

RISLEY, 21, stands with his plate balanced on one hand, a
fork in his other. He talks directly to DEAN CORNWALLIS now.

RISLEY (CONT'D)

It is therefore, of all the arts,
the closest to death.

DEAN CORNWALLIS raises a finger in acknowledgement and hums.

Risley puts a forkful of food in his mouth and chews as he
speaks.

RISLEY (CONT'D)
Wagner's by no means unhealthy.

Another STUDENT lingers behind him, serving food to his plate from a discreet buffet table. The student sits. JOEY FETHERSTONHAUGH, 21, is sat in the middle of a three-piece sofa, his fork hovering by his mouth as he listens and chews.

RISLEY (CONT'D)
He's merely expressing most exactly
the state of things.

Back on MAURICE, who ignores the debate in favour of his food.

DEAN CORNWALLIS
(O.S.)
Help yourselves to potatoes, Hall.
Don't stand on ceremony.

MAURICE looks up and shakes his head and fork to gesture a polite no. He returns his attention to the food.

CHAPMAN
(cheerfully)
I can't stand music. Or concert
halls. I don't go in for being
superior.

On RISLEY, as he turns away from the wall with the paintings.

RISLEY
(curious)
Don't you? I do.

On DEAN CORNWALLIS. He ignores RISLEY's response.

DEAN CORNWALLIS
(light tone)
Come along, Chapman, you're in need
of food.

On CHAPMAN, who is less cheerful now.

CHAPMAN
I expect Lord Risley isn't.

CHAPMAN puts his cutlery down and stands.

CHAPMAN (CONT'D)
I've put him off with my low talk.

MAURICE's eating stutters, unsure.

CHAPMAN approaches the buffet table, crossing paths with RISLEY who looks back at him.

RISLEY
I simply can't think of a reply to that.

RISLEY stands by the fireplace. He takes another bite, his focus now on MAURICE.

DEAN CORNWALLIS
(warning)
What about saying *nothing*?

RISLEY
(sarcastic)
Say nothing? Horrible, he must be mad.

RISLEY gestures toward the Dean, his UNCLE, with his fork.

MAURICE
What you do is more important than what you say.

Silence falls when MAURICE speaks.

MAURICE (CONT'D)
Your deeds are more important than your words.

MAURICE eyes Risley unsure. He returns to his food.

On RISLEY.

DEAN CORNWALLIS
(O.S.)
What is the difference?

RISLEY
Words are deeds. (to MAURICE) Are you trying to say that these few minutes talking in the Dean's rooms have done nothing for you?

RISLEY sits on Chapman's vacant chair, his body angled toward MAURICE, intrigued.

RISLEY (CONT'D)
Will you, for instance, ever forget that you've met me?

On CHAPMAN. He laughs, an overtly loud and polite sound. He heard this as a funny line.

DEAN CORNWALLIS is irritated.

DEAN CORNWALLIS
You're confusing what is important
with what is impressive. Chapman
and Hall will always remember
they've met you, of that I have no
doubt.

RISLEY looks at DEAN CORNWALLIS from his chair next to
Maurice.

RISLEY
Exactly, because of my
conversation. Oh, they'll forget
that they were engaged in the act
of eating a... cutlet.

DEAN CORNWALLIS
(disgruntled)
At least the cutlet does some good
to them. You, do not.

RISLEY
I mean Dean, that a cutlet merely
influences their subconscious life.
I, by my words, shape the
consciousness.

On MAURICE, who chews, his eyes careful when he looks at
RISLEY.

RISLEY (CONT'D)
(O.S.)
I am therefore not only more
impressive than the cutlet but
infinitely more important.

MAURICE looks down at his food, distracted. RISLEY stares
pointedly at him.

RISLEY lets his fork fall loud to his plate. He gestures to
DEAN CORNWALLIS, falling back onto his chair to lean closer
to MAURICE.

RISLEY (CONT'D)
Your dean here dwells in
superstitious clouds of Christian
self-righteousness. Your dean
pretends that only insensate faith
is of any significance.

The room pauses, now shocked with food midway to mouths and
cutlery silent, mid-cut.

RISLEY (CONT'D)

And daily, he droops soporific into
his soup.

DEAN CORNWALLIS

(fed up)

Oh, Risley, *shut up*. Come on.

DEAN CORNWALLIS stands. Chapman looks at RISLEY, amused.

MAURICE

(quiet, gally)

I think if a man has ideas like
that, he should have the courtesy
to keep them to himself.

RISLEY

No, no, no, on the contrary, one
must talk, talk, talk.

MAURICE looks up from his plate to RISLEY.

RISLEY (CONT'D)

It's only by talking that we shall
caper upon the summit. Otherwise,
the mountains will overshadow us.

(beat)

I'm sure, Hall, you will agree.