

THE WILLOWS

'PILOT'

Written by

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Inspired by

The Wind in The Willows



MANCHESTER
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QUARTER-FINALIST

OVER BLACK.

SUPER: *Take the Adventure, heed the call, now ere the irrevocable moment passes* - Kenneth Grahame

EXT. THE COUNTRYSIDE. SHROPSHIRE, ENGLAND. DAY.

A taxi meanders through the countryside. Open fields. Rolling green hills. Livestock and orchards. It moves slowly and peacefully, taking in the view...

SUDDENLY a souped up black corvette convertible screams past in a hazardous overtake. In response to the TAXI DRIVER laying into his horn, a long, painted middle finger is raised above the head of the florescent green haired driver.

Leaving the taxi far behind, the convertible crests the top of the next hill and a town reveals itself, all spread out in the valley below. A classic English town, there are autumnal trees and a number of old stone buildings. Here and there, tight, narrow roads and tight, narrow hedges. A church. A graveyard. A town square. A post office. A long and winding river running through the centre of it all.

INT. TAXI. CONTINUOUS.

Removing his hand from the horn, the taxi driver stubs out his cigarette into an aged ashtray upon the dashboard, spitting smoke out through a crack in the driver's window.

TAXI DRIVER
Bloody kids.

In the backseat, a young man with the soft suggestions of youth still visible in his round face looks on in interest. Introducing MILES TALBY (19).

Miles has his face pressed up against the window, taking in everything. On the seat next to him sits a bulging backpack, covered in old, fading boys scout badges.

They drive past a sign that welcomes them to the small town of ... in Shropshire, but someone has spray painted *THE WILLOWS* over the original town name, making it unreadable.

MILES
The Willows?

TAXI DRIVER
Local name. Never hear it referred to as anything else.

MILES
Fascinating.

TAXI DRIVER
Suppose so.

The taxi driver studies Miles through the rear-view mirror.

TAXI DRIVER (CONT'D)
Where was it you said you was
from?

MILES
Oxford.

The taxi driver makes a face indicating a confusing mix of dislike while simultaneously unable to not be impressed. Miles doesn't notice, too occupied with the drive through town, which is proving to be quite captivating.

EXT. TAXI. CONTINUOUS.

The town isn't empty, but it's inhabitants aren't many. Those who are out and about - kids playing, teens smoking, adults doing their grocery shopping or visiting the post office - they all turn and watch the taxi drive by.

INT. TAXI. CONTINUOUS.

TAXI DRIVER
Don't get strangers through here
much.

MILES
Why?

TAXI DRIVER
(noncommittal)
Dunno. Not much to do I suppose.

Through Miles' window, there is a noticeable lack of the usual tourists and tourist paraphernalia (hotels, motels, gift shops, little local museums, etc.)

MILES
How strange.

Not at all put out, Miles sounds absolutely thrilled at the prospect of a small English town in the middle of nowhere.

EXT. TAXI. CONTINUOUS.

The taxi bumbles over a small bridge cresting the town river.

INT. TAXI. CONTINUOUS.

Miles presses his face against the window to try and see over the edge of the bridge.

MILES
(suggesting)
There is the river.

TAXI DRIVER
Yeah, but only locals dare swim in it.

MILES
Why?

Miles looks up, excited.

TAXI DRIVER
Algae.

MILES
(disappointed)
Oh.

EXT. TAXI. CONTINUOUS.

The taxi continues on into the residential area of town. Here the houses are all stone and tightly packed together. Flowers and bright green foliage squeezing through wherever they can, flowing over roofs and bunching up under windows.

INT. TAXI. CONTINUOUS.

Miles has unglued his eyes from the window, conversing with the taxi driver through the rear-view mirror.

MILES
So, do you live here?

TAXI DRIVER
No.

MILES
Oh, why not?

TAXI DRIVER
None of your business.

Miles frowns a little, but is distracted by what's speeding past outside: a large cemetery on a hill overlooking the town.

MILES
I'm sorry.

TAXI DRIVER
S'alright. As I always say, if you don't ask questions you won't have to worry about not gettin' any answers.

MILES
(distracted by view out window)
I suppose, but where's the fun in that?

The taxi driver looks drained by Miles' continuous upbeat attitude.

TAXI DRIVER
(to himself)
Kids these days.

EXT. THE WILLOWS. CONTINUOUS.

The taxi moves out through the other side of town, heading for a large estate in the near distance.

EXT. GRAND ESTATE. THE WILLOWS. DAY.

A confronting set of black, wrought iron gates stand sentry, set between two thick walls of stone covered in ivy. A compacted dirt road behind them is just visible beneath the shadows cast by the number of towering, ancient trees lining the entry to the vast estate.

Both Miles and the taxi driver have their heads hanging out of the car window, silenced by the view. The taxi driver has struck up another cigarette, smoking sullenly, but Miles looks like Christmas has come early. He steps out of the car, retrieving his backpack from the backseat and a large suitcase from the boot. The taxi driver watches him closely.

TAXI DRIVER
Yeh sure you're in the right place?

Miles drags his suitcase off the road, dumping it next to his backpack. He stops to once more admire the large gates before him.

MILES
Undoubtedly.

The taxi driver flicks some ash out of his window.

TAXI DRIVER
This place gives me the fucking
creepies.

Miles turns, confused.

MILES
How so?

TAXI DRIVER
Places this old, who knows what
shit its seen in its lifetimes.

MILES TALBY
(breathless)
I think it's brilliant.

The taxi driver looks unconvinced as he withdraws into the car.

TAXI DRIVER
(grumbling to himself)
It's your funeral.
(to Miles)
Be seeing you then.

The taxi pulls away in a cloud of dust.

Miles steps towards the grand entrance, picking out a series of words curling their way across the top of the gates like vines, iron leaves and branches woven in-between the thick black bars.

Nos sumus in vento quod non moritur

Nos sumus in vento in salices

Miles silently mouths the words as he reads them.

END OF EXCERPT.