

"Creation"

Screenplay by John Collee

From the book "Annie's Box" by Randall Keynes

Note:

Our story alternates between Past and Present

"Present" means the fall of 1858 when Darwin was 49. The children are: Etty (15) George (14) Betty (11) Franky (10) Lenny (8) and Horace (6).

"Past" means the summer of 1850, when Darwin was 41. The children are: Willy (11), Annie (9) Etty (6) George (5), Betty (3) Franky (2y) and baby Lenny.

3 **EXT. COASTLINE. DAY**

3

A POV shot through a telescope: The whirling birds the strange half-animal forms of the savages.

The whole scene is jerky, out of focus and inaudible at this great distance like a very old silent movie.

CHARLES DARWIN (V.O.)
 In Terra del Fuego. The "land of fire" - A blighted and loveless country on the earths furthest rim - there lives a community of the dirtiest, the rudest, the least civilised beings you can imagine.

The telescope focusses. The image becomes a little clearer

4 **EXT. CLIFF TOP. DAY**

4

The flock of boobies fly out to sea.

The savages follow as far as the top of the cliffs, where they stop in sudden amazement, staring at a distant sailing ship.

DARWIN (V.O.)
 They were all completely naked, the men as well as the women, with hair down to their bottoms. They spoke in grunts and they never washed their hands and faces! In many respects they resembled wild animals, except that animals are kinder to their children.

A savage child makes a comment and gets biffed on the head again.

Strange, foreign cries of the sailors are faintly audible over the water, as the anchor is dropped with a rattle and a splash. A small boat is lowered.

DARWIN
 One day, Captain Fitzroy went ashore to meet them.

The slow rhythm of the oars.

Sailors and savages clutch their weapons, watching each other in breathless anticipation.

5 **INT. DAGUERROTYPE STUDIO. THE PAST. DAY.**

5

A door opens and a figure in black, hurries past, clutching a number of prepared photographic plates in their light proof cases.

TECHNICIAN

Not long now. I shall be with you immediately...

ANNIE DARWIN, wearing in a checkered dress, aged about 9 years old, sits looking straight at camera.

She has short hair and a pretty oval face

On her lap there is a posy of artificial flowers, in the background an improbable vista of jagged mountain.

PHOTOGRAPHER (O.S.)

Ready now. Very still please.

ANNIE

Will this hurt, papa?

DARWIN

No. It is only a beam of light.

ANNIE

How can light make a picture.

DARWIN

Well they prepare a copper plate with chemicals on it. The chemicals are sort of energized by the light reflecting off your face. Then silver sticks onto the plate according to where the light is brightest.

ANNIE

Betty was worried it would hurt.What a little duck she is.

DARWIN

So as I was saying, Captain Fitzroy went ashore to interview the Fuegians....

6 **EXT. SHORE. TIERRA DEL FUEGO. DAY**

6

Waves lap on the black pebbly beach, where a young naval captain FITZROY with mutton chop sideboards disembarks lightly from his jolly-boat.

DARWIN (V.O.)

After some discussion persuaded
three of the savages' children to
come home with him.

The "discussion" is more in the nature of heated bargaining
for slaves.

Fitzroy finally produces enough cloth and axe-heads to
secure the deal.

The unwilling children pushed away by their parents and
grabbed by sailors who bundle them, biting crying and
kicking, into the waiting boat.

DARWIN (V.O.)

Their names were Jemmy Buttons,
York Minster and Fuegia Basket.

7 **INT. BELOW DECKS. DAY.**

7

Below decks: a slapstick struggle with soap and scrubbing
brushes - much biting kicking and howling - as sailors
scrub the children clean.

SAILORS

Ow! Shite! Hold still ye maggot!

DARWIN

The captain had them washed and
got their hair cut, then dressed
them in proper clothes, and
taught them proper table manners.

8 **INT. CAPTAIN'S CABIN. DAY**

8

The children, cleaned and dressed, seem happy enough in
their new situation.

They sit at the captain's table clumsily sawing with a
knife and chasing Brussel sprouts around a plate with their
cutlery.

A sprout shoots off the table

9 **EXT. SHIP'S DECK. DAY**

9

Splosh! A weighted canvas body bag is tipped overboard.

The rough unshaven seamen crew all remove their hats, some
of them cry openly.

14 **EXT. ROCKY CREVICES. TERRA DEL FUEGO. DAY**

14

At the first sight of their countrymen, Jemmy and Fuegia rip off their clothes, drop the bible and the telescope, and run to join them, yelling like nut-cases.

HAIRY SAVAGES
YAAAAAH!!

JEMMY/ FUEGIA
Yaah!! Yahh!!

The benighted young parson scrambles after them, collecting their discarded garments from among the rain-swept rocks.

PARSON
Jemmy! Fuegia

The telescope is smashed. The Bible lies abandoned - the wind catching its soggy pages and whirling them off in the storm.

15 **INT. DAGUERROTYPE STUDIO. DAY.**

15

Darwin still laughing, dabs his eyes

ANNIE
(laughing)
Yaaah!

The photographer disappears behind black curtains.

TECHNICIAN
Very still now. No more talking
please

Annie composes her face in an expression of angelic seriousness.

A glass dome above her head glows snapdragon blue

Close on Darwin watching his daughter, his eyes still damp with tears of laughter.

Electricity hums. The strange blue light glows brighter, brighter... Brighter.

The image of his daughter imprints on Darwin's memory. Just so. Forever.

16 **INT. DOWN HOUSE. DINING ROOM. THE PRESENT. EVENING.**

16

Servants are laying a table for dinner

Gas lamps and the coal fire struggle to illuminate the lofty room.

Mrs Davies the Welsh cook, bangs the dinner gong and shouts across the darkening garden outside.

MR DAVIES (O.S.)
Children! Franky! Horace! Dinner!

Darwins attractive wife Emma adjusts the lamps and the boys run in, Franky aged 10 Lenny aged 8 Horace aged 6.

LENNY
Mama mama.

EMMA
Yes. What is it

LENNY
Horace says he's six feet tall.

EMMA
Have you all washed your hands.

HORACE
He said I have to be or I can't join the army.

EMMA
First things first. An officer must always tuck his shirt in.

Their elder sisters Betty and Etty take their places at table

BETTY
The boys made a camp with a camp-fire

LENNY
Oh! Sneak!

EMMA
Where's the campfire.

BETTY
In the summer house but Brodie put it out.

Parslow enters with the turreen

EMMA
Thank-you Parslow. Where is Mr Darwin?

PARSLOW
He was killing pigeons Ma'am

EMMA
Will everybody sit down please.

As they are pulling in their chairs, Darwin enters, drying his hands on his trousers.

He's aged ten years since we last saw him and has lost his former air of gaiety.

He sits, with a distracted nod to the family.

PARSLOW
Soup du jour, sir

The children smile at Parslow's air of earnest formality but the atmosphere even among the younger kids is sombre and subdued.

DARWIN
Thank you Parslow

He butters some bread and starts eating. Emma clears her throat.

DARWIN.
Oh.

The children bow their heads. The bread stick in darwins mouth. Emma says grace.

EMMA
Lord God who watches over all
that we do. Bless this family and
the food we eat. In Jesus name.
Amen.

Everyone repeats the "Amen" except Darwin.

EMMA
I hear Mr Hooker is coming
tomorrow.

The children prick up their ears at this. They like Hooker

DARWIN
He won't stay long.

EMMA
Did he say what it was about?

DARWIN
I think this is not the time to
discuss it.

EMMA
Maybe the time to discuss it was
before you invited him.

DARWIN
He sent a telegram. I'm sorry if
it inconveniences you.

Emma purses her lips and turns her attention back to the children

EMMA

Eat your soup now.

Darwin takes a couple of spoonfuls, pauses, as a wave of nausea sweeps over him, then pushes away the dish.

DARWIN

(To Parslow)

Tell Mr Davies it was delicious,
but my stomach is not quite right
yet.

(To Emma)

Excuse me.

He gets up and leaves. As soon as he has gone, the children natural talkativeness reasserts itself.

CHILDREN

Can we take Mr Hooker to the
Chalk pits. Why can't he stay.
Can we pick blackberries?

EMMA

I think he is just here to work

17

EXT. DOWN HOUSE. DARWIN'S STUDY. THE PRESENT. NIGHT.

17

A branch taps gently against the window pane, like an insistent guest demanding to be admitted.

The coal fire burns low in the grate - wind in the chimney rattling the damper

Firelight flickers on a collection of finches in a glass case, on a bird skeleton, on a fossil, and on numerous specimen bottles containing the fleshy parts of barnacles preserved in spirit-of-wine.

Darwin sits immobile in his chair, regarding a locked, black lacquered steel trunk, on the floor under his work table.

A voice speaks behind him.

ANNIE

Aren't you going to open it?

He turns and sees her sitting on the day bed - the same little bright eyed girl from the daguerrotype studio.

She's the same age as she was then and wearing the same checkered dress - though Darwin himself has aged ten years.

DARWIN

Maybe best if I just burn the whole lot.

ANNIE

(horrified)

No papa - You can't. I'm in it.

DARWIN

Don't be absurd. Of course you're not.

ANNIE

The story of me when I was small. You showed me the pages.

DARWIN

Ah yes.

ANNIE

"The natural History of babies"
...Remember?

DARWIN

Of course I remember.

He continues to stare at the shiny black box, his hand fluttering lightly - a nervous tic.

Music seeps in - a soothing Chopin Nocturne and....

18

INT. DOWN HOUSE DRAWING ROOM. THE PAST. NIGHT

18

Darwin aged 40 - bright-eyed and inquisitive leans over to examine something, offering it his finger tip while making little tut tut tut noises.

In the cot is a one-month old baby.

DARWIN

Annie. Annie. Annie.

The piano music continuing over, as her fist closes round the end of his finger, then tries to pull it towards her mouth.

He pulls it away from her and she frowns.

He offers it again and the tug of war becomes a game.

Baby Annie laughs.

Darwin writes something in his notebook. Then tucks his pencil behind his ear and tries out various facial expressions - scowling, smiling - to gauge the baby's response.

Emma turns on the piano-stool.

EMMA
(affectionately)
What are you doing?

DARWIN
Just playing.

She comes over and, leaning against him, reads from his notebook.

EMMA
"Six weeks: Gurgles. Holds tight to my finger. Tries to suck. Smiles at my smile"

The baby lets out a long yodel of pleasure

DARWIN
I should add that she is musical.

EMMA
I hope you do not plan to treat all our children as little animacules to be included in your experiments.

DARWIN
Do you mean there will be more.

EMMA
I assumed that's what you wanted. Of course, if the idea doesn't appeal then...

DARWIN
Appeal? Dearest cousin. I am making plans for an army!

He takes Emma in his arms. She gives a little squeak - caught off balance then laughing as he waltzes her around the room, singing.

19

EXT. WOODS AND MEADOW. THE PAST. DAY

19

An army of children - the Darwin family - run across the screen from left to right. The little kids first, scampering through the hay meadow off into the trees.

Household servants follow, carrying blankets, hampers and parasols.

The red haired Scottish nursemaid Brodie, shouts ahead to the little ones.

BRODIE
Careful! Not too far ahead now.

The children ignore her so she pick up her skirts and races after them.

The Adults follow in their wake - Charles and Emma Darwin plus two younger men aged about 30 - Joe Hooker and the Rev Innes

20

EXT. RIVER BANK. THE PAST. DAY

20

They have set up their picnic on a river bank.

Emma is reading.

Joseph Hooker is teaching the boys to fish. He has spectacles and long wispy side-whiskers: a battered panama on his head and his trousers rolled up to his knees.

HOOKER
Give it time to take a bite.

The fishing float moves a little

HOOKER
He's Nibbling. Nibbling. Oh
Bother. No-one move.

He's dropped his spectacles in the shallows.

George (aged 5) feels a jerk on the line. He squeals and drops the rod. The fish takes off upriver. Will goes after the dropped rod.

On shore, Annie runs up with a collecting box to show her father

ANNIE
I've got one.

She opens the box to show him a little black beetle.

The local parson, Innes, inclines his head to inspect it

ANNIE
What should I feed it?

MR INNES
A leaf I should think. What plant
did you find him on?

ANNIE
In the mud under that log.

Innes looks to Darwin for advice

MR INNES

...Or a piece of bark maybe.

Darwin peers at the insect

DARWIN

Cyrcus caraboides. You can see
from the mandibles he's a hunter.
He feeds on slugs and snails.

INNES

Oh.

Annie runs off, calling to the other children

ANNIE

Etty! Willy! Find me some slugs.
He's hungry!

INNES

When I said I knew something of
insects.....

DARWIN

Oh tush.... I studied Theology
for a year but yet I know
exceedingly little of the bible.

INNES

Then once I am properly installed
at Down I shall take pleasure in
instructing you.

DARWIN

I should look forward to that
immensely.

Emma, knowing her husband's ambivalence towards religion,
casts him a slightly arch, amused look. Innes notices this,
though he pretends not to.

Hooker returns from the river, looking slightly damp, with
the rod which he has managed to retrieve

HOOKER

Everyone's a bit wet. Sorry, but
the fish are surely biting. More
worms, boys, more worms.

George is looking under stones

HOOKER

Try over there, Georgey, we've
used all these ones up.

INNES

Oh, I was not at all
suggesting....

Emma waves it away. Just teasing

DARWIN

He made the point that if every
trout, say, has a hundred
offspring And so on and so on
through the generations. Then the
planet would be knee deep in
trout in just a few decades.

INNES

Of course most of the eggs are
destroyed and eaten so the
numbers remain stable. That is
the beauty of God's plan.

Emma gives Darwin a "So there" look and hands Innes a
sandwich.

EMMA

Cheese and cucumber

INNES

Thank-you

Somewhere in the woods, Annie has found a treasure trove of
worms and slugs.

ANNIE (O.S. DISTANT)

Over herethere are millions!

DARWIN

It doesn't strike you as an
exceedingly wasteful plan - these
myriad lives created only to be
immediately extinguished.

EMMA

(a gentle warning)
Charles....

INNES

(confidently)
They are providing food for
others.

DARWIN

You think they are happy about
it?

INNES

Happy?

Close up on a writing worm. Hooker is instructing George how to put a worm on a hook.

HOOKER

Through his bottom and up through
his mouth - perfect

DARWIN

....To be doing Gods will.

EMMA

(to Innes)

Please ignore him. After two
glasses of claret he tends to
becomes mischievous.

DARWIN

No I'm serious. If thousands are
destroyed that a few may live
their lives, is not the general
sum total of happiness not in
some kind of massive deficit?

INNES

Well far be it from me to
speculate on the mind of God, far
less the happiness of an
earthworm ha ha ha. But it seems
to me that nature is at
peace...and most of her denizens
are content.

EMMA

Amen.

INNES

(to Darwin)

You don't agree.

DARWIN

I think it is a battlefield. A
constant and shifting struggle
for survival between everything
and everything else.

EMMA

I really do think men have a
problem with natural beauty. They
cannot ever just accept it for
what it is.

(Calls off)

Children! Sandwiches!

(Then)

Tell me of your wife Mr Innes.

Darwin lies back on the rug and turns his head away from the sun.

WILLY

Papa says God doesn't care if we
are neat.

BRODIE

(brushing)

Your father is a very wise man
but has a small understanding of
religion. No-one can read what
goes down in Gods great book of
accounts.Fingernails.

Willy presents them for checking.

BRODIE

You can go.

30

INT. HALLWAY. THE PAST. DAY.

30

The children come racing and swinging and clattering down
the stairs.

Emma, holding the baby in one arm, steers a tricycle out of
the way, clearing a path to the door

EMMA

Mrs Davies, Will you ask Jenny to
wear a bonnet. I would not like
people to think her fast.

George aged 5 tugs at her skirt

WILLY

Can I bring my mouse for a
blessing?

EMMA

What mouse?

George (5) pulls it out from his pocket. Its dead, muddy
and bloody

GEORGE

Elsie caught it in the barn. We
need to pray for his soul

EMMA

Mice don't have souls. Leave it
on the window sill. Everyone come
now or we shall be late.

31

EXT. LANEWAY. DOWN HOUSE. THE PAST. DAY

31

Pealing of church bells

Mist rises from the ploughed fields and hangs among the ancient oaks.

A little procession heads down the lane. The Darwins - Charles and Emma - plus their servants and children (older now, for we have flipped into the present), all in their Sunday best.

The trees are bare. Their breath condenses as they walk.

32

EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE. THE PRESENT. DAY

32

The ancient flint church stands in the centre of Downe (sic) village, opposite the George and Dragon pub.

A massive and venerable Yew tree casts its shade over a number of gravestones one of them inscribed "*to Mary Darwin born Sept 1842 died Oct 1842.*"

Beyond the church fence, villagers greet each other before heading inside. The great majority of the village have turned out, from Squire Lubbock through the tradesmen and domestic servants from the village to the clodhoppers (farm labourers) in their colored smocks.

Rev Innes is welcoming his large flock at the gate.

EMMA

Reverend Innes.

INNES

(smiling)

Ma'am. Welcome. Welcome

Then his eye moves on to Charles Darwin and his smile falters, his expression turning slightly cold.

Darwin tips his hat rather stiffly and walks away, through the throng of parishioners, leaving his family to file into the church without him.

33

EXT. WOODLAND. PRESENT. DAY

33

Darwin walks across the meadow and into the woods.

A flock of crows take flight from the rookery in the bare trees overhead.

34 **INT. DOVECOTE. PRESENT. DAY**

34

In darkness, a furious struggle, squawking and frantically beating wings.

Darwin seizes on a dove and backs out of the dovecote, the silhouette of his upper torso taking shape in the square hole in the floor.

He climbs down the ladder, passes the captive bird down to Parslow, then climbs back up and pushes his upper body into the dovecot again, in search of the next victim.

35 **EXT. THE GARDEN. DOWN HOUSE. THE PRESENT. DAY**

35

The dovecote is a substantial affair on four pillars with a ladder in the centre.

Outside the dovecote, the boys are racing around playing at soldiers. (Franky 10, Lenny 8, Horace 6)

Parslow has a number of the birds in cages

DARWIN

Ring the two milky pouters. We'll
sacrifice the tumblers and
skeletonize them. Then...

He looks up as a coach appears in the lane. The boys immediately break off from their game and run after it, shouting.

BOYS

It's Mr Hooker. It's Mr Hooker!

Darwin tries to wipe the bird shit off his hands and succeeds only in getting it on his sleeve.

His breathing quickens. He seems at a loss. Parslow is awaiting further instructions

PARSOLOW

Then... what Sir?

DARWIN

Just. ...to the shed with them. I
shall clean myself up.

He hurries off.

36 **EXT. THE FRONT GATE. THE PRESENT. DAY.**

36

The coach pulls up and Hooker alights - ten years older than when we saw him catching fish, but still with the same hallmark side whiskers and wire-rimmed spectacles, the same springy step and ready grin.

Already he is being mobbed by the younger boys - Lenny, Franky, and Horace - who clearly adore him.

BOYS(AD LIB)

- We're the Light Brigade Horace is a Russian.

HOOKER

Good choice Horace. I shall be Lord Raglan and watch the slaughter from a safe distance.

BOYS

- Will you give us a piggy-back?
- Lenny cut his foot on a nail.
There was lots of blood!

Emma emerges from the front door. She smiles, pleased to see Hooker despite her misgivings.

Then her smile falters as another man emerges from the coach behind him.

HOOKER

Emma. Forgive the short notice.
You know Thomas Huxley.

EMMA

Only by reputation

HUXLEY

Mrs Darwin.

HOOKER

He insisted on coming and I could not refuse him.

EMMA

Tell papa his visitors are here.

LENNY

He knows already.

HORACE

He went that way.

Emma smiles brightly, covering for her embarrassment at her husband's increasingly erratic behavior.

EMMA

Anyway. Come in please. Come in.

Hooker heads towards the house, the boy still clustered around him.

FRANKY

Sir, Is it true when you were in the Himalayas you were imprisoned by the king of Sikkim?

HOOKER

Absolutely true.

LENNY

And he thought you were a spy for stealing his rhododendrons?

HOOKER

That's approximately true.

FRANKY

....and he wouldn't let you leave unless you agreed to marry his fattest daughter.

HOOKER

Yes. (Conspiratorial)but you are never to tell my wife that!

EMMA

Children leave Mr Hooker alone now. I'm sure he has more important things to discuss.

HOOKER

Not really, but I think Mr Huxley does....

Huxley has seen Darwin, washing his hands by the "skeletonizing shed".

Huxley hangs back to introduce himself as Hooker steers Emma off into the house.

HOOKER

I have my heart set on a cup of tea and one of Mrs Davies' scones.

Emma looks anxiously after Huxley but allows herself to be gently side-lined.

37

INT. KITCHEN. THE PRESENT. DAY .

37

Emma is by the kitchen window, rearranging tea things on a tray.

The sky outside is dark and lowering.

Through the window she can see Darwin heading off down the sand walk - head bowed, walking stick in hand - deep in conversation with Huxley.

She drops a tea-cup which smashes on the stone floor.

MRS DAVIES

I'll do that ma'am. Please. Let me do it.

38

EXT. DOWN HOUSE. THE SAND WALK. THE PRESENT. DAY.

38

The Sand-walk is a gravel walking path between the garden and the fields, flanked by mature oaks and ancient willows.

HUXLEY

We're reforming the Linnean. The committee will comprise myself, Lyell, Huxley...yourself of course if you are willing.

Darwin grunts noncommittally. The Crunch crunch of their feet is punctuated by the regular stomp of his metal-shod walking stick.

HUXLEY

We intend to reclaim science as a profession - wrest it away from the country parsons and beetle-collectors. Your book will be our rallying point.

DARWIN.

You know it is not yet any fit state to publish.

HUXLEY

I have read your detailed abstract. The argument is complete and utterly compelling. All that is lacking is the detail and we know you have that in abundance. Your barnacle work has established you as the pre-eminent authority on marine life.

DARWIN.

On one small mollusc!

HOOKER

In which the whole story of creation can be read. Do not pretend to me that was not your intention.

DARWIN.

Honestly....

HUXLEY

A "family tree" of barnacles stretching back 300 million years to the time it was a free swimming prawn!.

DARWIN.

There are many gaps.

HOOKER

Of course with gaps! But that is the very point. If we but had the complete fossil record we could trace all life back to one speck of protoplasm. The branching of forms in ever more complex succession...until.

DARWIN.

Yes yes, but one cannot infer too much.

HOOKER

Mr Darwin. Either you are being disingenuous or you do not fully understand your own accomplishment. You have killed God.

DARWIN.

Mr Huxley

HUXLEY

....and good riddance to the bearded malicious old bugger!

DARWIN

(interrupts)

Please I must beg of you....

HUXLEY

No. I must beg of you sir. Joseph Hooker we know is too nice a chap to do it. You are a fine and brilliant man who hates to give offence - an admirable quality - wish I had it myself. But what do we believe? What do we know to be true. Will you light the way or leave us all to flounder in the mire for another decade.

He stops and lowers himself onto a bench, teeth clenched.

HOOKER

Are you alright?

DARWIN.

A touch of indigestion. It will pass.

Its clearly worse than that, but Huxley, refusing to be distracted, blithely ignores it and sits down beside him til the worst of it passes.

HUXLEY

It is time to write your book Mr Darwin. Write it brilliantly as we all know you can. Strike hard and fast with a blow that is utterly conclusive.

DARWIN

(in pain)

Sir, you are talking like a revolutionary and really...

HUXLEY

It is a revolution. And not before time. Goodbye to the lot of em - damned bishops and Archbishops with their threats of eternal punishment.

DARWIN

And you'd replace Gods Laws with what.

HUXLEY

The laws of logic. The laws of nature.

DARWIN

Knowing, as we do, that most capital crimes are her everyday practises: Theft, rape, murder, adultery, infanticide....

Huxley waves it away

DARWIN

We live in a society bound together by the church. An improbable sort of barque I grant you but at least it floats. You suggest we change all that at a stroke. You wish me to rebuild, plank by plank, the very vessel we are sailing in.

The Coach to London has pulled up outside the front gate. Huxley is aboard. Darwin is talking with the coachman

Hooker comes down the path in his black coat, carrying his Gladstone bag.

EMMA

Mr Hooker.

He turns. He has already said his good-byes.

EMMA

I beg you, please don't push him.

HOOKER

No-one can push Charles. You know how fixed he is. Bit of a barnacle himself ... his own words.

EMMA

And if you prize him from his rock he will die. I know you all mean well but....

COACHMAN

(Impatiently)

All aboard!

Hooker gets aboard. Huxley leans out of a window and waves cheerily to the whey-faced Darwin

HUXLEY

We'll meet again, Mr Darwin

40

INT. THE LANEWAY. DAY

40

The coach pulls away.

Looking back through the rear window Hooker sees Emma with the boys clustered around her skirts.

HUXLEY

What did she say to you?

HOOKER

That it was killing him.

HUXLEY

A mighty slow death considering the time he's spent. We'll be dead and buried ourselves if he prevaricates much longer.

Huxley takes off his spectacles and polishes them, embarrassed by Huxley's directness, inspecting his own conscience in the bevelled glass.

41 INT. DARWIN'S STUDY. NIGHT

41

In the darkened study, with his specimens and books all around him, Darwin kneels by the box.

Steeling himself, he unlocks the padlock and opens the lid and takes out the papers and notebooks which are stored there.

The bulk of it is a single manuscript, accumulated over many years, divided into 14 chapters with pages of notes interleaved.

The Chapters are headed. *Variation under domestication, variation under nature, Struggle for Existence, Natural Selection....*

A noise behind him almost makes him jump out of his skin.

Its Annie, ten years old in her checked dress, as she will always be in his imagination.

ANNIE

Why are you scared?

DARWIN

Like you said. You're in it.

ANNIE

Its only a book, silly.

He sits there regarding the open box, paralysed by indecision. Annie tenderly smooths his hair, rearranging his collar.

DARWIN

What are you doing, Annie?

ANNIE

I'm making you beautiful.

DARWIN

I have to work.

Though the soft touch of her little hands is almost too real for him to bear and he closes his eyes

ANNIE

Breath in, papa. Breathe out. Now Tell me a story.

DARWIN

I have no time....

ANNIE

About Jenny. Please?

The sound of a wave breaking. Wind stirs Darwin's hair

He opens his eyes and he is

42 **EXT. ENGLISH BEACHSIDE. THE PAST DAY**

42

Sitting with Annie ten years ago on an English pebble beach.

She has collected a pile of shells and is arranging them in "families".

The dialogue is continuous

DARWIN

Why do you always ask for Jenny?
Its so sad.

ANNIE

That's why I like it. It makes me
cry.

She looks up from her shells and smiles winningly.

Darwin looks out to sea, at the bright crashing line of surf, and begins the familiar, much-told tale:

DARWIN

Once upon a time there was a
family of Orang-u-tangs living in
the jungles of darkest Borneo

43 **EXT. JUNGLES OF BORNEO. DAY**

43

Our POV moves between dark tropical trees to find a group of Orangutans flopping around grooming each other.

As with the land of the Fuegan savages, there is something slightly artificial about these jungles, as though the trees really belong in Kew gardens, and the naked jungle warriors, whom we now see stalking through them, are on loan from the museum of mankind.

DARWIN

Their eldest daughter was the
most loving, caring and trusting
Orang of all.

We follow a young nimble female, swinging through the trees, revelling in her own gymnastic ability, until she stops - hearing something: the sound of human speech.

DARWIN

But these qualities in themselves
cannot guarantee an ape's
survival. Sometimes, quite the
reverse.

Native hunters are creeping through the undergrowth

A warning screech from one of the Orang-u-tangs posted as
lookouts.

Most of the apes flee up into the canopy. Jenny stays where
she is, fascinated, just a moment longer than is prudent.

DARWIN

When she realized her danger it
was too late.

As she turns to flee a weighted net is thrown on top of
her. The hunters pounce.

DARWIN

They put her in a bag and carried
her off....

ANNIE

" much to her loving parent's
sorrow."

DARWIN

Exactly.

The family screech and hoot, anguished, as the hunters head
back off through the trees.

44 **EXT. MARKET-PLACE. DAY**

44

Exotic coins and bank-notes pass from hand to hand: from
the tribal chief to the sultan, in his overlarge turban,
from the sultan to the trader in his solar topee and
stained white suit.

DARWIN

The hunters sold her to the
Sultan who promptly sold her to a
visiting Englishman who packed
her aboard a sailing ship and
brought her to London zoo.

Jenny is taken out of a bamboo cage and put into a metal
cage.

45 **INT. CARGO SHIP. DAY**

45

The cage is lowered by a crane. Jenny looks out from her
swaying prison at spinning grey skies and brick warehouses.

46

INT. CAGE. LONDON ZOO. DAY

46

Now she sits disconsolately in a corner of her permanent enclosure.

She has been dressed, ridiculously and poignantly in a smock and a bonnet.

A group of onlookers are trying to get a reaction out of her. Eventually they give up and move on.

DARWIN

In London she had many admirers -
of whom your father was but one.

Darwin moves forwards from the shadows, where he has been observing and taking notes.

As the other humans move away he attempts to start a conversation with Jenny in her own language, much in the way he communicated with baby Annie.

DARWIN

Hoo hoo hoo hoo.

Jenny regards him sceptically then looks away.

DARWIN.

HOO!!

She startles and looks at him aggressively.

DARWIN

Hm?

He reaches in his pocket. This gets her interest. She comes closer, expecting food.

Darwin takes out a sprig of verbena - a strongly scented herb.

He holds it in front of his nose and inhales, making contented expressions of pleasure.

Jenny watches.

Darwin holds the verbena towards Jenny.

Cautiously she extends a hand through the bars.

Their fingers touch in space, like God Giving life to Adam. For Darwin it's a breakthrough - a moment of connection.

Jenny eats the verbena and spits it out, shrieking angrily.

CHARLES

Wait, sorry, wait - I've got
something else here for you

He reaches in his pocket. She cocks her head, alert.

With the air of a conjurer, he pulls out:

A child's hand mirror, flashing as it catches the sun through the skylights.

CHARLES
(pleasurable surprise)
Ahhhh!!

He shows Jenny her own reflection and, then hands the mirror through the bars.

Jenny takes the mirror, bites it, discovers it is inedible, and smashes it on the ground.

Charles makes a sad, whining sound

CHARLES
Hew Hew Hew...

JENNY
(pouting)
Hmph.

Meaning: "OK then, I'm sorry."

It's such a complex human reaction - grudging contrition - that Charles laughs aloud with pleasure.

Jenny laughs.

Charles takes out a mouth organ and plays a snatch of Chopin.

Jenny covers her ears and chatters. "Not listening not listening!"

Charles, insulted, stops playing.

Jenny laughs waves a hand as if to say: "Play, if it amuses you. I'm must kidding."

47 **EXT. THE BEACH. THE PAST. DAY**

47

The salt wind. The dazzling light. The slow pulse of the surf.

Darwin has paused in his narrative.

ANNIE
Go on papa.

DARWIN
Go on what.

ANNIE

The bit where she gets sick and dies.

DARWIN

No. Why do you want to hear that bit?

ANNIE

I just like it. It makes me cry.

Darwin smiles, his own eyes filling with tears.

Then a door opens, softly, in the sky.

48

INT. THE STUDY. THE PRESENT. NIGHT

48

It opens wider to reveal Emma's elegant profile, framed against the gaslight of the hallway.

Her POV: the black box is unlocked and open, its contents strewn around the floor at darwins feet.

Darwin is sitting on the floor of the study holding in his hand a magazine, published by the Society for the useful Distribution of Knowledge, with a picture of Jenny on the cover

EMMA

Are you coming to bed?

DARWIN

Presently.

He doesn't move. She comes in

EMMA

What did Huxley want?

DARWIN

He thinks I should write it and be done with it. He feels it is a question of moral courage ...or the lack of it.

EMMA

You did not tell him about your health.

DARWIN

His theory is that I am making myself ill by holding back. That I should lance the boil. Plunge in and hang the consequences.

EMMA

Thank the Lord he is not a surgeon.

Darwin takes a breath and plunges in himself:

DARWIN

I've concluded he is right. Bite the gag. Speed is everything. It will all be over in a matter of months.

Emma is horrified.

EMMA

It is not mere months that concern me Charles. Nor even years or decades...

Its said quietly but with genuine anguish. To Emma it is as though her life partner has announced he's contemplating suicide.

EMMA

Do you really care so little for your immortal soul - for the knowledge that you and I may never be together, in all of eternity.

DARWIN

(softly)

You know that what concerns you concerns me also. What do think has held me in limbo all these years.

Emma has. They both know it. She turns abruptly from the door and hurries away.

49 **INT. BEDROOM. THE PRESENT. NIGHT.**

49

Emma has been crying. She lies in bed pretending to sleep.

Darwin gets into bed behind her. He wants desperately to reach out a hand to touch her, to comfort her, but he cannot do it for fear of weakening his own fragile resolve.

DARWIN

Dearest Emma. You know This is not a decision made lightly....

50 **INT. DARWINS STUDY. THE PRESENT. DAWN**

50

In the dawn light, Darwin is writing a letter to his wife.

DARWIN (V.O.)
 It has been a very slow and
 gradual process, like the raising
 of continents.

51 **EXT. GARDEN. THE PRESENT. DAY.**

51

EMMA stands alone in the wintry garden, a white apron over her black dress, reading.

DARWIN (V.O)
 What else can I say to you,
 except that it seems the process
 is now complete.

A tear tracks down the curve of Emma's cheek as she folds the letter, puts it in her pocket and return to the business of dead-heading flowers.

In voice over we hear singing.

CONGREGATION
 All things bright and beautiful,
 all creatures great and small.
 All things wize and wonderful,
 The lord God made them all.

52 **EXT. DOWN VILLAGE CHURCH . THE PAST. DAY.**

52

Move in through the graveyard, past the ancient yew..

CONGREGATION (OS)
 Each little flower that opens,
 Each little bird that sings,
 He made their glowing colors,
 He made their tiny wings.

53 **INT. DOWNE VILLAGE CHURCH. THE PAST. DAY.**

53

The church is packed for the Sunday Morning service

The Darwin family stand in the front row.

Emma, the servants and the rest of the family are singing lustily: Parslow - a somewhat pompous operatic tenor, Brodie and Innes both loudly Scottish (Innes out of tune), Annie by Darwins side, trilling along in a tuneful little descant.

She notices her father is not singing and offers him her hymn book with the words.

Darwin smiles and returns it. Its not that he doesn't know the lyrics, its just that he can't bring himself to say them.

DARWIN FAMILY

All things bright and beautiful
all creatures great and small.
All things wize and wonderful the
Lord God made them all.

The organ, played by Mrs Innes, wheezes to a pause. Innes himself mounts the pulpit.

INNES

Let us pray.

Everyone bows their heads in prayer.

INNES (CONT'D)

Lord God we know the world is
governed by Thy plan.

Darwin is immediately not listening.

He looks along the row of his children, standing dutifully in a line between Charles and Emma.

George, aged 5, is studying the woodlice which are nesting between the pages of his hymnal

INNES (O.S)

Extending even to the merest
creatures thou hast made, such
that even a sparrow falls not to
the ground without thy will.

Darwin, stands watching the play of light from the stained glass window on his shoes. Then raises his head

INNES

Teach us that all misfortune.
All sickness and death, all the
trials and miseries of which we
daily complain are intended for
our good, being not the vagaries
of an uncaring universe but the
corrections of a wize and
affectionate parent

Innes looks up sternly and sees the Darwin's head raised among the sea of down-turned heads.

Their eyes meet briefly in a sort of challenge, and in that moment, Darwin somehow knows with absolutely certainty that religious faith has left him.

With a whispered word to the beadle standing next to him to take the collection Darwin slips out from the pew and heads off up the aisle.

DARWIN

Excuse me

He's intending to be quiet and subtle but the creaking boards under his feet loudly announce his departure.

Innes raises his voice above the fusillade.

INNES

Turn with me now to the book of
Job, Chapter Two verse twelve

The congregation, not daring to raise their heads, watch Darwin's sturdy walking shoes departing down the aisle.

54 **EXT. THE CHURCH. THE PAST. DAY.**

54

The rise and fall of Innes's voice continues in the background as Darwin walks out from the porch, emerging from shadow into sunlight.

A summers day. He feels like a weight has been lifted.

The church beadle comes out behind him.

BEADLE

Are you all right, sir?

DARWIN

Never better. Thank-you.

He heads off up the gravel path

55 **INT WOODLANDS. THE PRESENT. DAY**

55

The faint and Distant sound of church singing filters through the misty woods. The black wet trunks of trees catch the sunlight.

Frosty dew highlights Mistletoe and holly and dead bracken and the sudden red flash of a robin.

Darwin cuts a strange dark angular figure, walking along the narrow track a single step at a time.

He pauses breathing, and listens.

His quick eye catches the robin seizing a worm.

Further on. A pheasant breaks cover. A hare stands upright in a clearing then bounds away.

Darwin looks down and takes another step, placing his feet carefully, silently so as not to disturb the wildlife.

Cut to a different pair of much newer shoes in exactly the same spot.

56

INT. WOODLANDS. THE PAST. DAY

56

Darwin is ten years younger, pacing in the same, measured way through summer woodland.

There's a noise behind him and he turns, finger to his lips for silence.

Annie turns away from him and passes the sign down the line of children: Eddy, George, Betty and Franky, in decreasing order of height.

ANNIE

Shh

FRANKY

(to ANNIE)

What are we looking at?

The question comes back up the line

DARWIN

A weasel.

The children bunch up to gaze on a strange and wonderful sight.

In a little sun-dappled clearing a weasel is turning loop the loops in a strange spiralling dance for the benefit of...

...a young rabbit, which sits utterly hypnotized by the performance.

At first its strange and amusing, then the dance becomes more sinister. The weasel advancing by tiny increments as it tumbles in the air, finally

ANNIE

NO!

The weasel seizes the bunny rabbit by the back of the neck and shakes it savagely.

The rabbit shrieks and spasms.

Annie is beside herself, drumming the ground with her feet in a fever of fear and pity.

The rabbit is still in its death throes, its neck broken, its back legs still jerking

ANNIE
 No! No! Stop it. Daddy. Stop it.
 Make it stop.

The rabbit is already dead.

DARWIN
 Annie, Annie, Annie.

He sinks to his knees, heedless of the mud on his Sunday
 best worsted, embracing her.

The others are shocked and amazed by the rabbits death, but
 none of them distressed as Annie. They are country children
 and death is an everyday event

GEORGE
 The chickens do that too when
 cookie kills them

ANNIE
 (tearful furious)
 Chickens are different!
 (To her father)
 Why didn't you do something. You
 should have stopped it!

DARWIN
 The weasel has to eat. Its the
 way of the world. Annie

ANNIE
 Its not fair. Its not fair.

DARWIN
 No, its not fair at all.

Patting her and stroking her as the little sobs subside.

The weasel is dragging the dead rabbit back to its lair.

DARWIN
but still it is
 extraordinary, do you not think,
 that a weasel should learn to
 dance the polka.

Despite herself the concept amuses Annie. Chest still
 heaving with sobs - she dries her eyes and smiles at him
 through her tears.

57

INT. DOWN HOUSE. BEDROOMS. THE PAST .NIGHT .

57

Piano music - Chopin - plays softly over as Charles and Emma do the rounds of their large brood of children, turning out lamps and kissing sleeping heads, taking a doll from one sleeping child's embrace, a sword from another. Shooing a cat and her kittens from the bedroom.

EMMA

Good-night Lenny.

DARWIN

Good-night Frankie

EMMA

Good-night Betty.

Darwin watches his wife, a sensuous figure, stooped over the sleeping child, a lock of hair falling forwards as she kisses her.

DARWIN

Good-night George

EMMA

Good-night Etty.

DARWIN

Good-night Willy

DARWIN AND EMMA

Good-night Annie

She's sound asleep. Finally Charles and Emma are alone together in the blissfully silent house.

Emma smiles

EMMA

Dear Charles

DARWIN

Dearest Emma

He takes her hand and leads her to their bedroom.

58

EXT. THE BEACH. THE PAST. DAY

58

Emma lies on a rug, her head is in Darwin's lap. She is reading aloud from a new book of poems by Wordsworth.

EMMA

"Loving she is, and tractable
though wild.

(MORE)

EMMA (cont'd)
 And innocence hath privilege in
 her.
 To dignify arch looks and
 laughing eyes;
 And feats of cunning; and the
 pretty round
 Of trespasses, affected to
 provoke Mock chastisement, and
 partnership in play"

She puts the book down

DARWIN
 (smiling)
 Then we were wrong. She is not
 unique after all.

Darwin is watching Annie dancing in front of the surf ,
 turning cartwheels - a wild dancing sprite of the sea,
 oblivious to the cold, shouting and singing:

59

THE BEACH. LATER

59

Later, Near the cliff, Darwin is "geologising"

He's excited, breathless and windswept, shouting over the
 sound of the nearby surf as he clambers over the huge
 assorted boulders pointing out the geological strata to his
 kids who are more interested in clambering.

DARWIN
 This is Devonian, about 400
 million years ago. Rocks like
 this might have fishes in them,
 trilobites, tree ferns, corals
 maybe....

He knock off a corner of rock with his geological hammer,
 then moves on

ETTY
 Is this a bit?

DARWIN
 No that is Cretaceous ETTY. It
 was made a hundred millions years
 ago, when this cliff was a coral
 reef and Down village was a swamp
 full of great crocodiles.

Tap tap tap with his hammer as the boys scramble upwards,
 playing at mountaineers.

DARWIN

We might find oysters and sponges imprinted in it, or dinosaurs if we were lucky...

GEORGE

What's a dinosaur?

ETTY

Professor Owen invented them.

DARWIN

They are the giant lizards which lived on earth before there were any humans.

BETTY

But they weren't real

DARWIN

Of course they are, Betty. Did I never tell you of the skeletons I found in South America

(to Etty)

Do you remember Mr Martell?

ETTY

No.

Annie arrives, hopping nimbly over the rocks still in her wet swimsuit

ANNIE

Yes you do. When he came to tea and showed us drawings of his Iguanodon. And George burnt his fingers roasting chestnuts.

ETTY

Oh yes.

ANNIE

She doesn't remember.

DARWIN

You should have your clothes on Annie. You are quite blue.

ANNIE

Savages don't wear clothes.

She runs to the top of a great fallen rock, spreads her arms out, and yells to the sky.

ANNIE

I'm a Fuegian.

DARWIN
Well don't fall and hurt
yourself. Your mother would never
forgive me.

Annie gives a shout and disappears head over heels.

DARWIN
Annie!

ANNIE
I've found one!

In the rubble at the base of the rocks she has landed,
unhurt and quite by accident on a perfect specimen of a
fossilized trilobite.

60 **INT. DARWIN'S STUDY. THE PRESENT. DAY** 60

The black box lies open with all its secrets strewn around
the office.

Stacks of paper - a stack for every chapter - are held down
with paperweights - a fossil, a skull, a specimen bottle.

Darwin squares a stack of blank paper between his hands,
then reaches for his pen.

61 **INT. VILLAGE SCHOOL. THE PAST . DAY.** 61

Annie reaches for her pen.

Reverend Innes is giving the children their writing
lessons, according to "Mulhauser's technique"

INNES
First positions.

The children assume the position as if in some militaristic
drill.

INNES
Second positions.

Grips are adjusted, pens are dipped.

INNES
Assume the distance.

The children lean back fractionally, so their elbows are
just back from the edge of the desk.

INNES
.....and begin.

The Children start to copy the sentence which Innes has written on the blackboard.

Annie reads the sentence and hesitates: *"And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested"*

62 **INT DARWIN'S STUDY. DAY.**

62

Darwin massages his cramped hand then takes a blank sheet of notepaper.

DARWIN

Dearest Hooker. I am one week into the great project and I feel at last that it is real. Its title is "On the Origin of Species." As I write theses words why does it feel as though I am confessing to a murder...

A paper stirs in the breeze and he pins it with the nearest object to hand - Annie's trilobite.

His eye rests on it a moment

CUT TO

63 **INT. DARWIN'S STUDY. THE PAST . DAY**

63

The corrugated gray surface, greatly magnified.

The Darwin of ten years ago is examining the trilobite with a watchmakers eyeglass.

There is a small mirror above his desk, angled so as to give him a view of the path leading round from the front of the house.

Innes appears briefly in it, preceded by Annie, who is trotting to keep pace with him and crying.

Darwin, intent on his work, notices neither of them

From downstairs he hears the door knocker then Brodie's voice, then Emma's overlapping with half-heard fragments of Innes's Scottish brogue.

INNES (O.S.)

I thought you needed to know why
I had to chastised her.

Darwin remains immersed, examining each detail of the trilobite, comparing it with other specimens in books and in boxes.

INNES (O.S.)
It is not fair to the other
 nor to Annie herself that her
 head be filled with these ideas...

EMMA
 Are you listening, Annie?

Annie sobs louder, incoherent in her grief.

Darwin finally focusses on the sounds, recognizes her
 distress and gets up to investigate.

64

EXT .UPPER HALLWAY. DAY.

64

He reaches the top of the stairs. Annie is directly below
 him, slumped, still sobbing at the foot of the stairs.

Emma has ushered Innes to the porch out of sight.

INNES (O.S)
 I shall bid you good day then

The front door closes. Darwin comes downstairs

DARWIN
 What happened?

ANNIE
 Nothing.

DARWIN
 Its not nothing. (To Annie) Why
 are your knees bleeding?

EMMA
 Mr Innes had to have words with
 her. It is sorted now.

DARWIN
 Words are very well. I am asking
 what happened to her knees.

ANNIE
 Mr Innes sent me to the corner
 and made me kneel on rock-salt.

DARWIN
 What!

ANNIE

(in a rush)

I said there were dinosaurs and
he said there wasn't dinosaurs
but there were because you saw
them.

EMMA

(interrupting)

Annie. Let me talk to your
father. He told her to kneel til
she repented...

DARWIN

Repented what?

EMMA

The bleeding is due to her own
stubborn-ness. It is finished
now.

DARWIN

It is by no means finished. Where
is my coat. Its intolerable

EMMA

Charles. Please.

Charles ignores her, Forcing his arm into the sleeve of his
coat.

EMMA

Mr Innes is a dear friend and
neighbor. I beg you at least
appraise yourself the facts. She
contradicted him repeatedly. The
fault was Annie's Mr Innes was
quite within his rights.

DARWIN

(his arm is stuck)

In his rights to torture our
children for expressing the plain
truth.

Brodie appears and Darwin ushers Annie towards her

DARWIN

...Please take her to
kitchen.

EMMA

It is not the truth as he
sees it

DARWIN

Well damn how he sees it. Damn
the pair of them and all their
works

EMMA

Charles listen to yourself.
Listen

Blocking his path as he heads for the door. Her palm flat on his lapel, soothing, reasoning with him

DARWIN

Emma please. I will not have
Innes tell me what I can and
cannot tell my children.

EMMA

It is what I have told them every
night at bedtime. It is the
instruction my aunt and your
brother and most of our family
live by. It is what all of the
village believe ...or try to.
Charles. Must our children be
revolutionaries at nine years of
age. Write to him with your
concerns - our concerns - about
the manner of the punishment but
please do not set yourself
against him. Think of my feelings
on this. I beg you.

Finally his outrage has spent itself, neutralized by her
gentle persistence and the deep affection he holds for her.

DARWIN

You're right of course.... I'm
sorry.

He embraces her.

Emma is reassured, she cannot see the conflict written all
over Darwins face.

65

INT. STUDY. DAY. (THE PRESENT)

65

The conflicted expression has hardened, the furrows in
Darwin's brow etched deeper, as he dips his pen and begins
the second chapter.

From the floor below we can hear Emma practising a piece of
music on the piano - Chopin's revolutionary etude: a
rippling, brooding arpeggio running up and down the
keyboard, redolent of an angry sea.

Darwin's pen scratches doggedly over the paper.

66 **INT. BEDROOM. NIGHT.**

66

In the bedroom, in his nightgown, Darwin scrubs the ink stains off his fingers with a pumice stone.

Emma passes behind him, preparing for bed. He glances at her in the mirror

DARWIN
You're still angry with me.

EMMA
No. Why?

DARWIN
I can always tell by your playing.

EMMA
Not angry. I'm sad.

67 **INT. DARWIN'S STUDY. THE PRESENT. DAY**

67

Darwin sits at his desk, writing and editing, his hand clamped on the pen.

A voice speaks from nowhere

ANNIE
Talk to her.

DARWIN
(still writing)
And say what? She does not want to hear it.

ANNIE
Then write to her.

DARWIN
(irritably)
That is what I am doing Annie, I am writing all of it.

68 **EXT. DARWIN'S STUDY. DAY**

68

Emma, passing the open door glimpses Darwin talking angrily to himself as he writes.

DARWIN
....and then she can read it, and we can all be free of this! Now, please, Annie no more interruptions!

69 **EXT. GARDEN. DAWN**

69

The music continues, louder.

A frosty coating of dew covers the lawn.

Footprints lead to a strange wooden tower in the garden. Parslow stands outside, shivering in the grey morning light.

Darwin shouts from inside.

DARWIN

Pull!

Parslow pulls a lever.

There's the sound of crashing water, a yell of pain from inside the tower.

Ravens rise, calling, from the surrounding trees.

70 **INT. DARWIN'S STUDY. THE PRESENT. DAY**

70

Darwin dips his pen, scores out some text from his previous draft and writes again.

The music continues from downstairs, louder and more insistent than before.

71 **LOUNGE ROOM. THE PRESENT. DAY**

71

Emmas hands race back and forwards along the piano keyboard.

72 **INT DARWIN'S STUDY. THE PRESENT**

72

Darwin's pen scratches across the pages, making a noise like fingernails on a blackboard.

The music from downstairs seeming to drive into his skull

He speaks aloud the words he is writing, in an effort to drown out the piano music.

DARWIN (THOUGHT VOICE)

... In time small variations become
extreme...

Strange detailed drawings of barnacles are strewn across his desk, seeming to change and transmute before his eyes.

EMMA

And ever and anon the flame and smoke would come out in such abundance with sparks and hideous noises, that he was forced to put up his sword, and betake himself to another weapon, called "All Prayer"..."

81 **INT. ETTY'S ROOM NIGHT.**

81

The older girls ETTY and BETTY finish their prayers and jump into bed in their night-gowns

Emma comes in to take away their lamp.

ETTY

Is Daddy not coming to kiss us good-night

EMMA

He is still a little bit ill from working ...maybe tomorrow.

BETTY

That's what you said last night.

Emma turns out the light. In the darkness ETTY says.

ETTY

I think when Annie died he stopped loving us.

Emma returns to her bedside

EMMA

Oh come now, ETTY. You know that's not true. He is just a little bit ill - and a little bit busy.

82 **INT. BOILER ROOM. DAY**

82

In the bowels of Down House the house, we find Darwin wrapped in wet towels sweating in front of the wood-burning stove.

As he gazes into the leaping flames, Annie appears at his shoulder.

ANNIE

Is there really such a place as hell.

DARWIN

No of course not. How can there be?
If he is supposed to be loving and forgiving - what on earth is the sense punishing all these millions of souls.

ANNIE

But just suppose if there was. And all this was punishment.

DARWIN

All what?

No reply.

DARWIN

I don't know what you mean. All what?

83 **INT THE WATER TOWER. DAY**

83

Darwin stands, legs apart in the water tower bracing himself like a colossus against the full force of the deluge.

DARWIN

Pull!

84 **EXT THE WATER TOWER. DAY**

84

The gardener, splitting logs, watches Darwin stagger from the tower with a rug wrapped around him, and make his way back to the house.

85 **INT. DARWIN'S BEDROOM. DAY.**

85

Darwin lowers himself into bed, inky and tousled. He seems prematurely aged, crippled by the gruelling process of writing the book.

As he lies there, unable to sleep lines of written text seems to appear behind his closed eyes, or in the tangled vines of the wallpaper.

Emma speaks from the other side of the bed.

EMMA

Talk to Mr Innes. Please. You are clearly not well

DARWIN

He is what? A physician now

THATCHER

...a fellow of the Royal society
and a prodigious expert on
clams...oysters?

DARWIN

Barnacles.

THATCHER

Mr Goodman, now, is the foremost
pigeon fancier in all the
southern counties. Kent champion
two years running. I swear he can
give you any beak or plumage in
four generations. Head and tail
in five.

DARWIN

How do you do it?

GOODMAN

By breeding cousin with cousin. I
find it the fastest way to alter
the strain - provided you do not
weaken it in other ways.

Darwin takes a slug of whiskey

93

INT. DARWIN'S STUDY. THE PRESENT. NIGHT

93

He is drinking in his office.

The clock strikes twelve. The page in front of him remains
stubbornly blank

Darwin is rising from his desk when he sees something move.

In one of the bottles on his desk, a fleshy marine specimen
seems to have come to life.

It writhes blindly in its bottle of formalin, making a
sound like a baby crying.

Darwin, recoiling in horror, pushes himself back from his
desk. The castors on his chair trundle back from his desk.

Behind him he hears a tapping and turns to see that all the
birds in his big glass display case of Galapagos finches
have started to beat against the inside the crowded glass
case. They flutter, frenzied, tapping with their beaks on
the inside of the glass, which shatters as...

One by one the bottled specimens explode, discharging their
contents onto the floor.

A lamp falls over. The room is filled with birds the floor
awash with formalin and broken glass.

DARWIN

Go. Go!

99 **EXT. DOWN HOUSE. THE PRESENT. DAWN.**

99

Displaced doves beat the air.

Darwin climbs down the ladder, grabs an axe and attacks the wooden stanchions supporting the dovecote

Parslow comes running over from the skeletonizing shed, calling:

PARSLOW

Sir. Mr Darwin.

Darwin stands back, hair wild, eyes crazed, his sleeves covered in bird shit.

PARSLOW

Please rest sir. I'll have John Lewis remove it. Have some breakfast now and rest. Shall I call the doctor?

DARWIN

God know.

PARSLOW

Or the water tower.

DARWIN

A pox on all of them!

100 **INT. ANNIE'S ROOM. THE PAST. DAY**

100

The local doctor Henry Holland takes out various concoctions from his medical bag and arranges them on the dresser.

We are in the past. Annie is in bed with a fever.

Emma is pregnant.

DOCTOR

Calomel then, twice daily.

DARWIN

I will not give it to her.

EMMA

Charles....

DOCTOR

Mrs Darwin, it is nothing but chloride of mercury. I have prescribed it often in children as young as two.

DARWIN

Not to any of mine I hope. On the Beagle I dropped some on a microscope slide and all my animacules died of it.

DOCTOR

Well animacules are not persons. Presumably they would die if you dose them with Madeira wine.

DARWIN

On Madeira they thrived most excellently, as did Captain Fitzroy, while it lasted.

Annie enjoys the joke and gives Darwin a weak smile. The doctor regards her balefully

DOCTOR

Or if she would submit to be bled.

ANNIE

Please no.

DARWIN

I will write to Dr Gully again.

DOCTOR

(sceptical)
The hydro-therapist?

DARWIN

I have always found his treatments most effective.

DOCTOR

...no matter that they defy all sense of logic.

He is packing up his bottles and his lancets

DARWIN

Logic is not everything.

Emma shoots him a look. Til now scientific logic has been his guiding principle.

DOCTOR

Then I shall bid you good day.

DARWIN

Parslow will bring your carriage.
I will be down presently

The doctor leaves the room. Emma is in a terrible quandary

DARWIN

I should take her to Malvern.

EMMA

I think it is better she is here.

DARWIN

Gully can care for her properly there. She can be treated daily, as I was.

EMMA

Charles no. She is better with us. With her family. Please do not take her away from me.

101 **INT. DARWIN'S STUDY. THE PRESENT. DAY**

101

Parslow enters to find his master staring vacantly into space.

The page in front of him is still blank.

The study is in chaos. It seems as though the contents of the black box have multiplied and spread out to colonize every corner of the room.

PARSLOW

Post for you sir.

He leaves it by Darwins elbow and backs out.

After a while Darwin seems to rouse himself.

He picks up the largest envelope, postmarked Malaysia, and slits it with a letter knife.

The sender is a Mr Wallace. There's a covering letter and a twenty page attachment Darwin reads, and lets out a sudden loud bellow of laughter.

DARWIN

Ha!!

102 **EXT. DOWN HOUSE. THE PRESENT. DAY.**

102

Darwin sits in sunshine at the rear of the house, rugged up against the cold. Looking frail still, but oddly at peace.

INNES

Ah, there you are Mr Darwin.

Darwin looks up blinking in the sunlight to see the stocky, dark-suited figure of Mr Innes.

INNES

May I join you.

DARWIN

By odd means

He makes some space on the bench. Innes hesitates, unable to read Darwin's feelings towards him. The smile is welcoming enough but there is something not altogether balanced about it

INNES

Mrs Darwin informed me you would be alone andperhaps a need to counsel.

He sees an envelope on the ground and stoops to retrieve it.

INNES

You dropped this. What a beautiful postage stamp.

DARWIN

Yes. It is from the Spice islands.

INNES

I do rather envy your wide circle of correspondents. In my youth I always wanted to travel.

DARWIN

You are still young. You could be a missionary and follow in Mr Livingstone's footsteps.

INNES

Yes, although I have always felt there is quite enough evil at home without looking for it abroad.

(Then, casually)

Mrs Darwin told me of the book you are writing.

DARWIN

Not any more, thank goodness

INNES

You have finished it?

DARWIN

It has been finished for me. My correspondent in the spice islands has arrived independently at exactly the same idea, expressed in a mere twenty pages.

(MORE)

DARWIN (cont'd)

There's brevity for you. I had so far covered two hundred and fifty and come to a dead end. So finally I am rid of the project.

Innes is relieved to hear it

INNES

The Lord moves in mysterious ways.

DARWIN

He does indeed Mr Innes. I was reflecting only the other day on the fact that he has endowed us in his blessed generosity with not one but nine hundred species of intestinal worm each with its own unique method of infiltrating the blood supply and burrowing through the mucosa.

Innes shifts uncomfortably.

DARWIN

And then again on the great love he shows for butterflies by inventing a wasp to lay eggs inside the living flesh of caterpillars

INNES

Well. It is not for us to guess at His reasons.

DARWIN

No. We can leave that for Mr Wallace now. Should I advise him to stay overseas do you think? If he shows his face in Kent he may be required to kneel on rock salt.

Innes rises. He's a short man, acutely aware of any threats to his dignity, and he's had enough of this mockery

INNES

I once valued our friendship Mr Darwin. I had hoped it might be possible to restore it. Clearly in your present mood that is not going to be possible. My regards to Mrs Darwin

He starts off round the corner of the house.

Darwin listens to his footsteps receding, then turns his face back to the sun. When he opens his eyes sees a figure standing in the lawn.

It is Annie, plain as day, scowling at him angrily.

DARWIN

What? I am forestalled by Mr Wallace. That is the simple fact of it. What reason do you have to be angry?!

She shoots him a look of hatred then turns away from him and runs off towards the meadow.

Darwin, instantly remorseful, gets to his feet and hurries after her.

DARWIN

Annie!

He reaches the centre of the lawn and stopped by a sudden intense pain in the gut which strikes him like a blow and fells him to his knees.

He lies there gasping, his vision clouding as the pages of the Wallace letter slip from his grasp and are scattered to the wind.

A view from high above: spiralling downwards on the Darwin garden, as household servants emerge from various quarters and hurry to his assistance.

103

INT. DARWIN'S BEDROOM. THE PRESENT. DAY.

103

There are some faint stains on the plasterwork of the bedroom ceiling. Like lichen on a rock. Like an archipelago of islands.

Darwin lies, pale and weak, looking upwards from a sea of white blankets.

The door opens and he turns his head. Its Emma.

EMMA

You have a visitor.

DARWIN

No. No. I will not be bled or lectured to.

She gives him a pinched look, then Hooker pushes in behind her.

HOOKER

It is me. Thank God you are still with us. Word came from London you had suffered an apoplectic stroke.

DARWIN

No. Simply the great relief of liberation. Did you read the Wallace abstract.

Hooker bats the idea away

HOOKER

It is a letter. You have a book

DARWIN

...barely half of it

HOOKER

You have a book. What is not already on the page is most certainly inside your head and I intend to extract it, if it kills us both.

DARWIN

You have been talking to Huxley.

HOOKER

No. Had I done so he would have hastened here himself armed with every instrument of torture known to her majesty's navy.

(Then)

Charles I have read the first Chapters. It is brilliant. You must continue.

DARWIN

I cannot. Seriously Joseph, I am completely blocked. All my old symptoms have returned with a vengeance. The sweats the shakes the abdominal pains. The whole endeavour was cursed from the outset.

Hooker takes darwins hand, presses it to stop it from trembling

HOOKER

Charles. It was you who opened my eyes to the wonders of science. So let me open yours. You have an illness. You have had it as long as I have known you.

(MORE)

HOOKER (cont'd)

It is clearly made worse in times of overwork but the nature of the work is irrelevant. This is not visited on you by God or the devil. This is a set of physical symptoms. Go to Malvern and get treated.

DARWIN

Not Malvern

HOOKER

Why not. What is there to be scared of there. He has worked for you in the past it will work again. Then come back and finish the book. Your enemies are already toasting their good fortune but they shall not prevail.

DARWIN

What are you talking about. I have no enemies.

HOOKER

They are legion, believe me, and they are implacable. We are all of us fighting a battle against fear and superstition but we can win this battle. We must win it. You can win it for all of us. Go to malvern, then come back and finish it.

104

INT. DOWN HOUSE. THE PAST. DAY.

104

Upstairs, Servants are packing for a journey.

The vigorous Darwin of the past moves swiftly from room to room, gathering his things. Hat and gloves, books, spectacles, papers.

Emma, eight months pregnant, tries to keep up with him

EMMA

Charles, please reconsider

CHARLES

Emma it is weeks now, months. She is getting worse, not better.

EMMA

Then I am coming with you.

DARWIN

You cannot come. How can you possibly come in your condition.

EMMA

It is not so far.

DARWIN

It is two days by coach and train. Who will look after the others.

EMMA

I do not care for the others. I care for Annie!

Etty, coming upon then unexpectedly, hears this and is instantly heartbroken.

EMMA is devastated by the slip but is presently too overwrought to retract it.

DARWIN

Leave us please, Etty.

Parslow has gathered up Annie from her room and is carrying her downstairs, pale and sickly-looking, with Brodie fussing behind.

BRODIE

Make sure she is tucked in. Watch her shawl

ANNIE

I don't need to go.

At the bottom of the stairs, Darwin takes Annie from Parslow's arms

DARWIN

The coach is outside. I will carry her from here.

EMMA

Annie...

ANNIE

Mama...

She clasps Emma's hand. Darwin keeps heading for the door. Emma holds fast to Annie's hand and follows behind

DARWIN

You will see Mamma when you are better. Say goodbye now.

Parslow holds the door open. The coach is at the Gate. Emma stops on the threshold, unable to let go her daughters hand and suddenly deeply convinced that she is making a mistake here.

EMMA

Wait. I am coming with you

DARWIN

Please, Emma

EMMA

Wait there.

She hurries back inside. Darwin makes a decision and heads for the coach.

105 **EXT. DOWN HOUSE. DAY**

105

Down the patch and through the open gate with the servants following.

DARWIN

Get aboard. Brodie

ANNIE

(shouts back)

Mama!

The garden gate clangs shut behind them.

106 **INT. DOWN HOUSE STAIRWELL/ UPPER HALLWAY. THE PAST. DAY**

106

Emma looks out of the upstairs window, realizes they plan to leave without her and hurries downstairs again.

107 **INT. COACH. THE PAST. DAY**

107

Charles bundles Annie inside.

DARWIN

(to the coachman)

Go. Go.

EMMA

(calls)

Wait!

DARWIN

Go now!

ANNIE

Mama!!

The coach sets off. Emma runs to the gate calling desperately.

EMMA

Charles. Please God. No. Annie!

108 **INT. COACH. THE PRESENT**

108

Charles, feeble and debilitated, levers himself into the coach with Parslow assisting and slumps back in the leather upholstery.

Servants gather at the gate. Some of them tearful, not expecting him to return

109 **EXT. STEAM TRAIN. THE PRESENT. DAY.**

109

A steam train comes charging past trailing plumes of black smoke, striking sparks from the track with its wheels.

110 **INT. CARRIAGE. THE PRESENT. DAY.**

110

The sickly Darwin of the present sits hunched and nauseous, with Parslow sitting beside him with his suitcase on his lap.

Every jolt of the train sends a spasm of pain through Darwin's guts.

The people sitting opposite - a woman, a child, and a man - regard Darwin in silence. Whatever he suffers from its not good and they are worried about getting infected with it

They plunge into a tunnel. The carriage fills with smoke. Parslow gets up and tries to close the window but it won't budge. A burning ember flies inside and lands on Darwin's leg.

Darwin is too weak to lift a finger. Parslow slaps the ember and extinguishes it.

111 **EXT. STATION. MALVERN.**

111

The train wheezes to a halt. The doors open and the train disgorges its cargo of sick people, come to Malvern for treatment - a coughing child, a woman with one side of her face aflame with shingles - the halt the lame and the afflicted.

112 **EXT. HORSE AND CART. DAY**

112

Darwin sits in the back as the attendant drives them through Malvern.

DARWIN
Tell him not this way.

PARSLOW
(loudly)
Hello there. Stop. Can we go by
the other route

ATTENDANT
The Worcester Road is shorter.

DARWIN
...by the low road.

PARSLOW
He wishes to go by the other
route.

ATTENDANT
(with a sigh)
As you will sir.

He backs up the horses and turns the cart around

113 **INT. GULLY'S CLINIC. DAY**

113

Dr Gully is the chief physician at Malvern spa. His marble-tiled consulting rooms resound with the sound of rumbling pipes and dripping water.

Darwin reclines on a leather couch, watching the watery play of light on the ceiling.

A door opens and Dr Gully comes in, accompanied by two assistants.

Gully is a small dapper man wearing an apron over his shirt and tie. His trousers are tucked into calf-length Wellington boots.

He greets Darwin cheerfully, effusively.

MR GULLY
Mr Darwin, old friend. Mr Darwin.
It has been too long I fear. Tut
tut tut tut tut. What have we now
what have we now?

He clasps Darwin's hand, feeling his pulse at the wrist, then commands him to open his mouth

GULLY

tongue...

Darwin shows him.

MR GULLY

Ugh. Shirt up. Let me feel your liver.

Darwin untucks his shirt. Gully prods at Darwin's belly. Darwin winces.

DR GULLY

Pulse hectic, tongue furred, liver tender and enlarged.

Darwin's ink stained fingers speak volumes.

DR GULLY

No doubt you have been exercising your brain every hour that God gave you.

DARWIN

I was persuaded to write book.

DR GULLY

Madness there are far too many of those already. Are you Sleeping?

DARWIN

Poorly.

DR GULLY

I suppose never taking the 50C dilution of Chelidonium.

DARWIN

(shakes his head)

I had the gardener build a water tower. It no longer has any effect.

GULLY

Of course not. Your gardener is not a hydrotherapist. What on earth possessed you ?

DARWIN

I feared I was dying.

DR GULLY

Oh come come come. We shall not have that talk here.

Half turning to his assistant, who is staking notes.

GULLY

Of course. Plainly she is in heaven.

DARWIN

That is what my wife believes. It is a great consolation to her

GULLY

But not to you.

DARWIN

Emma and I have become ...divided on it.

GULLY

Does it affect your marital relations.

DARWIN

We have none ...to speak of.

GULLY

(a beat)

Are you familiar with the writings of DeQuincy. "There is no such thing known to the mind as forgetting."

DARWIN

I don't know what it means.

GULLY

He suggests we have thoughts which do not actually enter the realm of consciousness. Nervous fibres exist after all throughout the whole body. Is it not possible that certain primal feelings manifest in some physical way. Eczema. Boils. A fever. Might some blocked passion imitate a gall-stone? Or even manufacture one.

DARWIN

Well, until someone devises a machine to read nervous impulses, or a telescope to look inside the body I suppose we can only guess at it.

GULLY

We can Mr Darwin. We can look inside you. If you find yourself open to it, there is a way of seeing.

119 **EXT. STREETS OF MALVERN. NIGHT**

119

Darwin wanders the cobbled streets of Malvern, pausing occasionally to consult a hand-written address.

It is starting to rain as, finally, he arrives at the address he is looking for. A substantial terraced house.

Darwin descends a stone staircase to the imposing front door, and rings the bell.

As he waits for an answer a woman appears, unseen in the rain streaked window above, observing him.

Darwin rings again. A moment later the woman answers the door.

DARWIN

Mrs St John?

MRS ST JOHN

Mr Darwin. Come in.

120 **INT. MRS ST JOHN HOUSE. NIGHT**

120

The room is large and hot, crowded with pot plants, and bric- a-brac. Various fringed lamp-shades, a dancing Shiva, a framed picture of Lourdes, and some illustrations from the Tarot. None of this inspires Darwin with confidence.

ST JOHN

Just leave your coat on the table. Sit down here. Show me your palm.

The husky voice and the plunging décollete troubles Darwin, who hesitates.

DARWIN

Sorry. I'm confused. What is it you do exactly.

MRS ST JOHN

I envision what's inside your belly, dear. That's what you wanted, isn't it.

DARWIN

Envision how? When Gully described you I fancied some scientific instrument....

MRS ST JOHN

Depends what you class an instrument. In more resistant cases I might use a pendulum...

He frowns. She smiles.

MRS ST JOHN
Its ten shillings for a reading
by the way. In advance.

DARWIN
Well. I have a ten shilling note
here in my wallet.

He doesn't take it out.

DARWIN
If you can tell me the numbers on
it we can begin.

Mr St John' face hardens.

MRS ST JOHN
(coldly)
I'm a professional lady Mr
Darwin. I don't do party tricks.

DARWIN
I am a professional man. And I
asking for no more than I ask of
all my colleagues - a
demonstration of competence.

MRS ST JOHN
It is you who are here to be
tested, Sir, not me.

DARWIN
Then I am sorry to have wasted
your time.

He puts his jacket back on and heads for the door.

121 **INT. HALLWAY. NIGHT.**

121

Mrs St John follows him. As he reaches for the doorhandle,
and opens it, she says:

MRS ST JOHN
She's with you, you know that.

Darwin turns.

MRS ST JOHN
Your little girl. I saw her from
the window standing at the top of
the steps.

DARWIN
How dare you.

MRS ST JOHN

Pardon?

DARWIN

...prey on people's grief like this.

MRS ST JOHN

I have done no such thing.

DARWIN

(furious)

Do you take me for an idiot? Clearly Gully has appraised you of my history.

MRS ST JOHN

I beg to inform you he did no such thing!

DARWIN

It is chicanery of the very lowest order and I despise it utterly!

MRS ST JOHN

Get out.

122

EXT. THE HOUSE. DAY

122

Darwin steps outside and she slams the door on him. Darwin continues to rant at the closed door, standing in the pouring rain without his umbrella.

He gets to the top of the steps, and looks around, trying to get his bearings.

In a pool of lamp-light at the far end of the street a figure stands watching him.

Darwin squints at her through the rain, which is falling harder now.

The figure is Annie.

She looks at him crossly, then heads off up a cobbled side-street.

Darwin follows.

123

EXT. MALVERN. SIDE STREETS. VARIOUS. NIGHT

123

Darwin pursues his daughter up narrow cobbled lanes.

DARWIN

Annie. Annie!

The rain is getting heavier, turning the gutters into rivers.

Water overflows the drains and culverts and rushes over the cobbles, making them slick and treacherous.

Darwin hurries down darkened lanes and alleys, the sound of rushing water echoing all around, the little girl always ahead of him.

A DRUNK MAN in oilskins comes barreling past him, head down, cursing the weather.

A child's ball goes floating downhill in the current.

Darwin loses Annie, then he sees her again, at the top of a steep flight of stone steps.

Darwin, drenched chases after her.

124 **EXT. WORCESTER ROAD. NIGHT.**

124

At the top of the steps he stops for breath and he looks around.

There is no sign of Annie but he knows this street - The Worcester Road - a row of Grey Georgian houses, their backs against the hill, their sloping front gardens looking out over the rooftops of Malvern.

Most of the street is in darkness but the house directly opposite has lights in the window.

He knows this house also.

He hesitates, then crosses the street towards it.

125 **EXT. GUEST HOUSE. NIGHT**

125

Soaked to the skin, he raps with the brass door-knocker, then waits for someone to answer.

Muffled voices. Then a man answers from within.

LANDLORD (O.S.)

Hello?

DARWIN

Is Mrs Carey still the landlady here.

LANDLORD

No.

The door opens on a chain.

DARWIN

My daughter Annie ...lodged here
some years ago. Can I come in?

The man closes the door to release the chain, then opens it
again to admit Darwin.

DARWIN

I know this is an intrusion. I
wonder - could I visit the room
she stayed in?

The landlord doesn't know what to make of this

LANDLORD

Wait here. I'll get the missus.

He leaves Darwin dripping in the hallway which he goes and
consults with his wife in the lighted parlour.

Darwin looks around. This place is all too familiar to him -
the bevelled gold-rimmed mirror, the carved mock-Tudor coat-
stand.

Muffled conversation off.

There are crutches and walking sticks among the umbrellas.
Lavender potpourri in a brass dish. A wheel-chair in one
corner, a picture of the pieta above the door.

Finally, the land-lady emerges from her parlour.

LANDLADY

Which room?

DARWIN

Fourteen. I would only be there
ten minutes. I am happy to pay.

She goes into an alcove and emerges with a key.

LANDLADY

Up one flight and along the
corridor to the right.

DARWIN

I remember.

LANDLADY

Try not to touch anything.

Darwin, climbs the stairs to the Landing.

- 127 **INT. GUESTHOUSE. THE PAST DAY** 127
- The younger Darwin flees up the stairs.
- 128 **INT. GUESTHOUSE. THE PRESENT. NIGHT.** 128
- The older Darwin, reaches the top of the stairs and walks along the corridor to the right.
- 129 **INT. GUESTHOUSE. THE PAST DAY** 129
- The younger Darwin, races along the corridor.
- 130 **INT. GUESTHOUSE. THE PRESENT NIGHT.** 130
- The older Darwin, hesitates, chest pounding, outside the door of number 14, then unlocks it as...
- 131 **INT. GUESTHOUSE. THE PAST. DAY** 131
- The younger Darwin bursts into room 14 and takes in the scene.
- The room is full if light. A maid is bundling soiled sheets. Brodie is there with a harrassed-looking Dr Gully.
- They turn as he enters.
- Annie lies on the bed between them, her breathing fast and shallow. She manages a weak smile.
- DARWIN
- Is she any better? Does she want for anything?
- Gully stands up from the bed. His expression tells us hope is fading. Annie's pale sunken cheeks and caked lips confirm it.
- Darwin kneels by her bedside, clasps her little hand in his own.
- DARWIN
- Darling Annie. I am here now.
- Annie lets out a reedy whine of appreciation and strokes his lapel "making him beautiful"
- Brodie cannot bear it and bursts into tears.
- 132 **INT. ROOM 14. THE PAST NIGHT.** 132
- Annie sleeps.

Darwin sits up, writing to Emma, crying as he writes.

DARWIN (V.O.)

Dearest Emma. I think it best for you to know how every hour passes. It's a relief for me to tell you. Whilst writing to you I can cry tranquilly.

133 **INT. ROOM 14. THE PAST DAY.** 133

A local surgeon lays out various instruments, including a glass syringe with a long needle.

Annie struggles and whimpers. Brodie comforts her

DARWIN (V.O.)

Mr Coates the Surgeon came today to draw off Annie's water. This did not hurt her, but she struggled with surprising strength against being uncovered.

BRODIE

There there. It will all soon be over.

134 **EXT. CHURCH AT MALVERN. ENTRANCE. DAY** 134

Darwin enters through the heavy stone entrance.

135 **INT. THE CHURCH AT MALVERN. DAY** 135

The relatives of the sick, stand or sit among the pews, arriving, praying, departing

Darwin kneels awkwardly in front of the altar, clasps his hands together and prays:

DARWIN

Save her. I will believe whatever. Forever. Please save her

He looks up at the image of Christ on the cross, hoping against all reason, for some sense of epiphany.

It's not working. He feels nothing embarrassment at the cheapness of the gesture.

136 **INT GUEST HOUSE. ROOM 14. THE PAST .NIGHT** 136

Darwin sits alone with Annie who is babbling incoherently. He can't make out anything she says

DARWIN (V.O.)

Our dear child has taken a turn
for the worse. She talked a great
deal but we could seldom make out
anything. Much of what she says
we cannot make out from the
roughness of her poor mouth.

137 **INT. GUEST HOUSE. ROOM 14 NIGHT**

137

Dr Gully leaves, the surgeon arrives. The maids squeeze
between the two medical men, bundling sheets

DARWIN (V.O.)

Today she vomited rather much
again. Dr Coates has been to draw
off more water.

Brodie and the maid roll Annie on her side and cut off the
tail of her shirt, then roll her on her back again, with a
pillow between her two bony knees.

DARWIN

Is that good, my lovely

ANNIE

(suddenly lucid)
Beautifully good. I am making
custards.

DARWIN (V.O.)

Gully thinks her in imminent
danger.

138 **INT. DOWN HOUSE. DAY.**

138

Heavily pregnant Emma sits in the drawing room, crying and
reading Darwin's latest letter.

DARWIN (V.O.)

We sponged her with water and
vinegar, made her sweet with
chloride of lime....I fear we
must prepare ourselves for the
worst

139 **INT. ANNIE'S ROOM. GUEST HOUSE. DAY.**

139

It is midnight Darwin, exhausted, keeps a lonely Vigil by
Annie's bedside. Each breath seems like it will be her
last.

Suddenly she speaks: faintly but audibly:

ANNIE
The rabbit.

DARWIN
What?

ANNIE
The rabbit taught him the polka.

DARWIN
I don't understand my love.

ANNIE
Tell me about Jenny.

Darwin bends low to hear her more clearly.

DARWIN
What about her.

ANNIE
When she died

DARWIN
I don't want to talk about death
my love.

ANNIE
But tell me. I like it.

DARWIN
Well. What the keeper told me
was. When she was very sick with
pneumonia, lying very still, he
tried to feed her but she shook
her head, looking at him as
though to say: "Its nice of you
but really you shouldn't bother".
And as he bent down to take the
spoon away she brought her arms
around his neck and kissed him.
And then she was dead.

Annie smiles, puts her hands around her fathers neck and
dies.

140

INT. TRAIN THE PAST DAY

140

Darwin sits, his face wet with tears, reading, through
blurred vision, a letter from Emma.

EMMA (V.O.)

DARWIN

Sorry. I startled you.

EMMA

Take your coat off by the fire there. What time is it?

Darwin stays where he is, dripping on the carpet

DARWIN

We need to talk. I need to talk to you.

EMMA

Of course, but dry your hair. I shall call for a towel.

As she moves to the bell-pull he grabs her wrist

DARWIN

I went back to Worcester Road. I saw Annie.

EMMA

Charles. No.

DARWIN

Let me tell you.

EMMA

I don't want to hear it. This must stop.

DARWIN

You don't understand.

EMMA

I do! Do you think me deaf and blind. You have lived with her and spoken with her every day since she died.

Parslow comes in with firewood then sees Emma yelling at Darwin and hurriedly retreats, spilling logs in the hallway.

EMMA

She is more real to you than I am. She's dead Charles.

DARWIN

I know that.

EMMA

Then what is wrong with you that even our poor daughter cannot be left in her grave but you would....

DARWIN

I know she is dead. I know it. It is you who will not accept the fact, preferring to think of her in heaven.

This again! The unspoken argument which has been brewing for a decade, never before expressed so bluntly. Emma heads for the door

EMMA

Get away from me!

She heads into the hallway, he follows her ranting

DARWIN

Snowy white wings and dancing with the angels. Is that your idea of honesty.

Servants scramble out of sight and out of earshot

EMMA

Why did you come back. I will not hear this!

Emma picks up her skirts and hurries up the stairs. Darwin pursues her.

On the landing, Betty and Horace, wide eyed and terrified are bundled into the nursery by Brodie as Charles thunders up the stair.

DARWIN

You have to Emma, everything these was between us is gone. The boat is wrecked and sunk now. We have to hold to something else.

EMMA

To what. Your ghosts? Your theories? What Charles.

CHARLES

To the truth of what we know it.

She slams the bedroom door on him and bolts it.

DARWIN

Open this door Emma. The truth, how wonderful and extraordinary our daughter was....

EMMA

(through the door)

I know that. I do not need you to say it. Of course I know.

Charles throws his shoulder to the door and bursts through it. Emma screams

CHARLES

But free of the fantasy, free of
the rest, the silly vain hope
that we will be reunited in
heaven and the nagging unspoken
belief that I killed her!

In the lower hallway all the servants hear this

In the nursery, Brodie, aghast, covers the childrens ears

In the bedroom, Emma has nowhere left to run

EMMA

I have never said that

CHARLES

Say it now. Say it. And all the
rest that follows. That I should
have kept Annie warm that day on
the beach. I should not have
taken her to Malvern. I should
have let you come.

Tears spring to her eyes and to his. The fury has gone from both of them, leaving sadness and pity

EMMA

I should have insisted.

CHARLES

No. It was me. I took her from
you It was my fault.

EMMA

I could have followed. I was her
mother what was I thinking of.

CHARLES

We thought she would live. You
were not to know.

He moves to her, she startles, then lets him enfold her in his damp coat

EMMA

I did. I did know. I knew when
you left that I would never see
her again. I hated you for taking
her.

CHARLES

I hated myself. I knew that none
of them could save her.

(MORE)

CHARLES (cont'd)

All I could do was watch
hopelessly and weep for her -
then flee the place in terror,
not even waiting to see our poor
dear daughter buried. She was our
treasure and I failed her. We
both did. We should never have
married each other.

EMMA

What are you saying?

CHARLES

The unspeakable . I am saying
that you and I, in making our
perfect child, endowed her with
the very weakness which killed
her. Emma. That is what I
couldn't write. That is what
forestalled me all these years.
It wasn't you I was angry with,
it wasn't Innes and it wasn't
God. I was angry with my theory.
It was the truth I was angry
with. It is the truth.

Weeping, she shakes her head in furious denial. He kisses
her hair, her eyes, her tear-streaked cheeks...

146 **INT/ EXT BEDROOM, THE PRESENT. NIGHT**

146

Rain continues to batter the house outside

Inside Darwin and Emma make love, with a kind of wild
desperation, their clothes strewn all over the floor,
clinging to each other like castaways in a storm.

147 **INT OFFICE. THE PRESENT. DAY**

147

Darwin enters his office. The chaos that existed here
previously has been tidied away into files and boxes.

Darwin opens the black box, takes out the files, places
them on his desk, then sits down and begins to write

He reaches into the dark recesses of the forest. Darwin grabs it and stuffs it, squawking into his collecting bag.

152 **INT. DARWIN'S STUDY NIGHT** 152

Darwin comes in, empties the bag into a black box with perforations and closes the lid

DARWIN

He knew his wife wouldn't care for this creature so when he came home he locked it in a box, where it couldn't run around and do any damage.

153 **INT. DARWIN'S STUDY. DAY** 153

Darwin works at his desk. There's a plaintive cooing sound coming from the box next to his feet.

DARWIN

But every so often he'd open the lid and feed it, just because he couldn't bear to let it die.

Finally he opens the lid and offers the creature a biscuit.

It has grown a bit larger and made itself a nest. It takes the biscuit and peeps gratefully.

154 **INT. DOWN HOUSE. DAY** 154

Darwin goes to the box and opens it. There's nothing there but an empty nest and some broken eggshells.

DARWIN

One day he opened the box and discovered it wasn't in there at all. It had escaped with all its babies, who were nesting all over the house making a terrible mess.

155 **INT. DOWN HOUSE. DAY. VARIOUS** 155

The Darwin's, their children and their servants run around the house finding birds everywhere.

There is bird-shit on the curtains and the antimacassars, birds nesting in the sewing basket, the bread bin and the dress-up box.

Every time you open a cupboard, angry birds fly out and flap angrily around the room.

Mayhem. The house is in uproar.

DARWIN

But finally they caught them all,
and bundled them in a blanket and
he asked his wife to dispose of
them as she saw fit.

156 **INT. STUDY. CONTUNUOUS** 156

Annie listens entranced. Darwin pauses

ANNIE

And what did she do?

DARWIN

I don't know but I fancy she took
them out in the garden and set
them free.

157 **EXT. DOWN HOUSE. GARDEN DAY.** 157

Emma and Brodie come out carrying a huge white linen bag
between them.

They shake it out in the garden and birds come pouring out
of it.

High shot, looking down on EMMA as she watches the birds
wheeling round and round in the sky above.

158 **INT. DARWIN'S STUDY. DAY** 158

Darwin sits in his study window, watching a great flock of
birds wheeling in the sky outside, the whole flock forming
an ever-changing shape from the movement of its tiny
component parts.

159 **INT DARWIN'S STUDY. NIGHT** 159

Darwin puts down his pen, waking, as if from a dream.

The manuscript is finished.

The music of Chopin filters up from downstairs.

160 **INT. DRAWING ROOM. DAY** 160

Emma is playing by candle-light. Darwin places the
manuscript on top of the piano.

She stops abruptly. The last chord resonates in the musky
air.

DARWIN

Done. I have finally got it out of the air and into these pages. Will you read it and decide what must be done with it. I confess I no longer know and I am very tired.

She takes his hand and squeezes it.

161 **INT. DOWN HOUSE. BEDROOM.** 161

Darwin undresses.

162 **INT. DOWN HOUSE DINING ROOM** 162

Emma sits at the table and begins to read.

163 **INT. DOWN HOUSE. BATHROOM** 163

Darwin gets out of the bath and towels himself dry.

164 **INT. DOWN HOUSE. DINING ROOM** 164

Emma lights a candle from the one before and continues to read.

165 **INT. DOWN HOUSE. BEDROOM. NIGHT.** 165

Charles lowers himself into the bed, sleep washes over him like a wave.

166 **INT. DOWN HOUSE. DINING ROOM. NIGHT.** 166

Still Emma reads.

DARWIN (V.O.)

Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted objects we can conceive directly follow. There is a grandeur in this view of life ...in which endless forms most beautiful and wonderful have been and are being evolved.

Outside the sky is growing lighter.

167 **INT. DOWN HOUSE. BEDROOM. DAY.** 167

Charles wakes.

He opens the curtains on a clear autumn day. The house is unusually quiet.

168 **INT. DOWN HOUSE. TOP OF THE STAIRS. DAY.** 168

The grandfather clock on the landing strikes mid-day.

Darwin goes downstairs.

169 **INT. DRAWING ROOM. DAY.** 169

He enters the drawing room. There is no sign of Emma nor of his manuscript.

He goes to the window and sees her at the bottom of the garden standing over a bonfire, burning something.

170 **EXT. GARDEN. DOWN HOUSE. DAY.** 170

Darwin goes outside.

DARWIN

Emma?

She looks up from the fire. Darwin crosses the lawn to her. She's burning leaves and dead-heads from the flower garden.

DARWIN

Did you read it?

EMMA

Yes.

DARWIN

And....

EMMA

I wrapped it and put it on the table there.

There's a brown paper parcel on the garden table where they like to sit under the big Cyprus tree.

Darwin picks it up, it is addressed to John Murray, Publisher, stamped and sealed with sealing wax.

EMMA

You're right. True or not it must all be said. Probably most of it is true. God help us.

Darwin kisses her.

EMMA

Careful. I have soot all over my hands.

171 **EXT. BOTTOM OF THE DRIVE.**

171

Darwin stands with the brown paper package, turning it over in his hands.

DARWIN (V.O.)

Dear Hooker, I have today despatched to John Murray the completed manuscript. Who knows if anyone will buy it and how they will respond. No doubt many will wish *al diavolo* altogether. But least it is out in the world now and no longer torturing me.

John Griffiths, the postman, comes up the hill from the village.

Darwin gives him the manuscript. The Postman puts it in his satchel and heads on up the lane.

Darwin turns back and walks up towards the house.

As he does so a little figure, Annie takes his hand, and together they continue on home, Annie skipping happily by her father's side.

172 **POST-SCRIPT.**

172

Darwin's "Origin of Species" was sold out on its day of publication.

A classic to this day, it was reprinted six times before his death; and his burial, with full Christian honours, in Westminster Abbey.

THE END