

Firelight

Written by

William Nicholson

Copyright © 1997,
Hollywood Pictures,
Los Angeles, CA;
Carnival Films, UK;
Wind Dancer Productions, US

Shooting Script, 1997

"FIRELIGHT"

Written by

William Nicholson

Copyright © 1997,
Hollywood Pictures,
Los Angeles, CA;
Carnival Films, UK;
Wind Dancer Productions, US

Shooting Script, 1997

NOTE:

The opening sequences take place in late autumn, 1837, and mid-summer 1838. The main body of the story continues seven years later, over the winter of 1845/6.

Dialogue in brackets [] will be spoken in French, with English sub-titles.

1 INT. FIRE OPENING TITLES RUN

1

Blackness. Shapes come into focus out of the dark, grey on black, abstract patterns, shifting, meaningless. Low glimmers of dull red emerge here and there beneath the greys and blacks. The CAMERA IS MOVING, has been moving all the time: a CURVING TRACK that takes us past dark smouldering cliffs, to discover the outer portals of the fire. Dusty grey walls charged with heat. Shimmering canyons of living coal. As we probe deeper, blue flames flicker, and deep fissures discharge thin streams of creamy smoke. Hisses and pops here and there, as longtrapped gases explode in brief flares of brilliant light. On, on, deeper into the fire, to the realm of amber flame and crimson coal, a dazzle of heat that warps the air. Down hallways of fire to its volcanic core, drawn ever deeper by its danger and its passion, on, on, all the way to its glowing heart.

OPENING TITLES END

2 INT. MRS JAGO'S HOUSE, LONDON - NIGHT

2

A darkened room. A closed lantern lowered onto a table. Its side window is opened, revealing the bright orange flames of the circular wick within. The narrow beam of light illuminates a young woman, seated on an upright chair in the middle of the room. ELISABETH LAURIER is in her early twenties. Plainly dressed. And very beautiful.

The CAMERA MOVES slowly round her, making a full circle. Close enough to touch, a voyeur's gaze, lingering over her beauty. She sits motionless, allowing the examination, gazing ahead of her into the shadows at nothing. As the CAMERA COMES ROUND to face the single source of light, we become aware that in the shadows behind the lantern there sits a WOMAN, and a little deeper into the shadows, a MAN.

When the circling inspection is complete, we hear the low murmur of the man's voice. The woman passes on the instruction.

MRS JAGO
Stand up, dear.

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED:

2

Elisabeth stands. As our eyes adjust to the darkness, we make out some details of the room. A plushly-furnished sitting room, over-stuffed, vulgar.

The man's voice murmurs again. The woman repeats the order.

MRS JAGO

Turn around, dear. All the way.

Elisabeth turns herself around. She tries to see beyond the light. The man is no more than a bulk in the darkness. The woman now partly discernible: MRS JAGO, cheerful, buxom, about fifty. If Elisabeth feels any shame at this humiliating inspection, she doesn't show it.

Mrs Jago speaks low to the man.

MRS JAGO

Two years employment as a governess.
Piano, drawing. French, of course.
She's Swiss by nationality.

Another murmur from the man.

MRS JAGO

Are both your parents still living?

Elisabeth replies calmly, in excellent English.

ELISABETH

My mother is dead.

More murmurs.

MRS JAGO

What was the cause of your mother's
death, dear?

ELISABETH

She died in childbirth.

She says this without emotion. Her every response shows her to be a self-possessed young woman, who seems to do what she does of her own free will.

More murmurs in the shadows. Mrs Jago speaks low to the unseen man.

MRS JAGO

The father's in debt, it seems.

More murmurs. Mrs Jago turns back to Elisabeth.

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: (2)

2

MRS JAGO

The gentleman asks, do you have no other way to obtain the sum you need?

ELISABETH

Does the gentleman have any suggestions?

MRS JAGO

My dear, you're very pretty. You could marry, you know.

ELISABETH

Yes. I could sell myself for life. The gentleman's needs, as I understand it, are of a shorter duration.

A sound that might be a laugh. More murmurs from the darkness.

MRS JAGO

The gentlemen asks -

ELISABETH

Can the gentleman not ask for himself?

MRS JAGO

You're not to know who he is, my dear. No-one is to know.

Elisabeth looks directly towards the man in the shadows.

ELISABETH

He need not tell me his name. I would like to hear his voice.

Mrs Jago turns back to the man in the shadows, looking for instructions. The man - CHARLES GODWIN - speaks without showing himself.

CHARLES

What can you tell from a voice?

ELISABETH

A little.

Beat. They look at each other: though only one can see who it is he looks at.

CHARLES

Have you ever done anything like this before?

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: (3)

2

ELISABETH

No. Never.

CHARLES

Will you do it?

ELISABETH

Of course. Why else am I here?

Mrs Jago tut-tuts disapprovingly. She turns to whisper to Charles.

MRS JAGO

Shall I look further?

Charles never takes his eyes off Elisabeth. A long beat. Then:

CHARLES

No. This is the one.

3 EXT. ENGLISH CHANNEL - DAY

3

CUTTING through the grey-green sea, the CAMERA in the ship's bows, at water level. Smashing the swell, the water rising and rolling high on either side. So close to the surface that the sensation is of great speed and power: surging forward, carving the sea.

4 EXT. STEAM PACKET - DAY

4

TRACK along the deck of the cross-Channel steam packet, past PASSENGERS crammed together on benches, or leaning over the rails watching the screeching gulls. Past PASSENGERS strolling the length of the deck, and SAILORS checking the sails that snap in the wind on either side of the chimney stack. TO FIND Elisabeth, standing at the bow rails, gazing ahead towards the distant coastline of France.

5 INT. HOTEL BEDROOM, DIEPPE, FRANCE - DAY

5

Window shutters open, flap by flap, revealing a panorama of grey sea and sky. A hotel MAID, silhouetted by the bright light, moves across the double window, opening the shutters.

Elisabeth stands just inside the door, looking into the room. Now that the shutters are open, it can be seen to be a large room, in an excellent sea-front position. Simply but solidly furnished. A washstand and jug. A wardrobe with a mirrored door. Two wing-back chairs before a fireplace. A large bed.

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

FRENCH MAID

[Dinner is served at six, madame.
Will there be anything else?]

ELISABETH

[I'd like a fire, please.]

The maid looks at the fireplace, and gives an exclamation of surprise that the fire, though laid, has not been lit.

FRENCH MAID

[At once, madame.]

She kneels to light the fire. Elisabeth removes her hat, goes to the window, and stands gazing out at the sea.

6 INT. HOTEL DINING ROOM, DIEPPE - NIGHT

6

A dozen tables, about half of them occupied. Darkness outside windows which by day look over the promenade and the sea. A lugubrious off-season gloom seems to have settled over the diners. One table is occupied by a middle-aged FRENCH COUPLE, who eat with concentrated glee, not saying a word. One is occupied by two ELDERLY ENGLISH LADIES, who speak to each other in whispers. An ENGLISH LADY dines alone: pale, quite pretty, no longer young. Three MEN dine alone. And Elisabeth.

As she eats, she studies her fellow-diners; in particular, the single men. One reads a newspaper, and never looks up. Another is in some kind of private dream. But the third, SUSSMAN, a handsome gentleman in his early fifties, seems to have been expecting Elisabeth's look. He gives a smile, and a slight bow. Elisabeth gives a small nod of her head in response, and returns her attention to her food.

7 INT. HOTEL LOBBY, DIEPPE - NIGHT

7

Elisabeth comes out of the dining room after dinner, and crosses the lobby to the Reception Desk.

ELISABETH

[Has any message been left for me,
please? Room Seven.]

RECEPTIONIST

[Room Seven?]

She checks.

RECEPTIONIST

[No, miss. There's nothing.]

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED:

7

ELISABETH

[Thank you. If a message comes, I shall be in my room.]

She looks round the lobby. Nobody. Then Sussman emerges from the dining room, and catching her look, bows again. After a moment's hesitation, Elisabeth goes on up the stairs.

8 INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR, DIEPPE - NIGHT

8

Elisabeth makes her way down the corridor to her room. At the door to Room Seven, she stops. The door is ajar.

9 INT. HOTEL BEDROOM, DIEPPE - NIGHT

9

Elisabeth enters to find the shutters closed, the fire blazing, and the rest of the room in darkness. As her eyes adjust to the firelight, she sees she is not alone.

A man is sitting in one of the chairs by the fire, with his back to her. He rises and turns to her.

CHARLES

I hope you don't mind. I didn't want to be seen entering the room with you.

She closes the door behind her, and stands still, gazing at him. It's the first time she's seen him.

CHARLES GODWIN is in his early thirties: a grave warm weathered face, hair somewhat disarranged, clothing well-worn. Powerfully-built, but with an open, almost vulnerable look to him. A very physically attractive man, made all the more so by seeming not to know it.

CHARLES

I'm afraid I can't introduce myself. As you know.

ELISABETH

Yes.

CHARLES

Did you have a smooth crossing?

ELISABETH

For the most part.

CHARLES

Is the hotel to your liking?

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED:

9

ELISABETH
I have no complaints.

CHARLES
Please -

He indicates the chair beside the one in which he has been sitting. Elisabeth crosses the room and sits. He sits.

A moment's silence. It's clear that Charles is very nervous.

CHARLES
It's of the utmost importance that we're not seen together in public over these next few days. I must protect my reputation, not just for myself, but for others. Do you understand?

ELISABETH
Yes.

CHARLES
We'll meet each evening, after dinner, here in your room.

ELISABETH
As you wish.

Another silence.

ELISABETH
Are we to - to meet - this evening?

CHARLES
Yes. We have only three evenings.

ELISABETH
When are we to begin?

CHARLES
I thought you might like a little time to accustom yourself...

Elisabeth trembles. She too is very nervous, and wants it over with.

ELISABETH
I have accustomed myself. I'm ready now.

CHARLES
Very well.

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED: (2)

9

He rises, crosses the room, and locks the door; leaving the key in the lock. Elisabeth also rises. For a moment, both stand, as if frozen.

CHARLES

The fire gives more light than one expects. Does it trouble you?

ELISABETH

No.

Suddenly resolute, Elisabeth goes to the wardrobe and opens its high mirrored door; which acts as a partial screen. As Charles re-crosses the room to the chairs before the fire, she is already beginning to undress. Moving quickly, she unlaces and takes off her shoes; unbuttons her grey woollen dress, slips it to the floor, and hangs it up in the wardrobe. Underneath she wears a petticoat and a chemise.

Charles removes his coat, his shoes, his waistcoat; glancing up to catch a glimpse of Elisabeth, and looking away again. An odd mixture of openness and modesty.

Elisabeth slips out of her petticoat. Beneath the petticoat she wears drawers that come to just below the knee. She has no need to remove these drawers, because the garment is made with the inside seam open from the knee to the waist. This design, standard at the time, has practical and hygienic purposes; but to our modern eyes it presents a startling image of sexual availability.

She folds her petticoat and places it on a shelf in the wardrobe, and turns to face Charles.

ELISABETH

Will this do?

Charles is mesmerised by the sight of her. The combination of the white undergarments and the triangle of vulnerable nakedness, rose-tinted in the flickering light of the fire, is intensely erotic.

CHARLES

Yes...

10 LATER

10

CLOSE ON ELISABETH - Her face lying sideways on the pillow, as Charles makes love to her. It's clear from her face that she's stoically enduring an experience that she hopes will soon be over.

11 LATER

11

ELISABETH'S POV - A CLOSE TRACK up the side of Charles's body: naked from the feet to the waist, then his crumpled shirt, and so to his face, eyes closed in a light sleep.

Elisabeth is buttoning up her grey dress, standing by the wardrobe, her eyes on Charles. His naked limbs are beautiful in the firelight. As she watches, he emerges from his half-sleep, and his eyes open to meet her gaze. She doesn't look away: just goes on buttoning up her dress, all the way to the throat.

12 EXT. BEACH BOARDWALK, DIEPPE - DAY

12

Elisabeth walks along the beach boardwalk, wrapped in a travelling cloak. At this time of year the boardwalk is virtually deserted. The tide is out, and far off, by the sea's edge, there are clusters of mussel-pickers, stooped over the shining sand.

A man comes walking briskly in the opposite direction. It's Sussman, the smiling diner from the hotel. He raises his hat to Elisabeth, and smiles again. Elisabeth acknowledges him with a small inclination of the head, and keeps walking.

She comes to a stop where the boardwalk ends, and stands gazing out over the immense empty beach to the grey sea and the sky.

13 INT. HOTEL BEDROOM, DIEPPE - DAY

13

Elisabeth sits by the fire, reading a book. Rain is falling outside the window.

A tap on the door.

ELISABETH

[Who is it?]

HOTEL MAID (O.S.)

[Maid, madame.]

The door opens, and the hotel maid comes in, carrying a tray. On the tray is a bottle of champagne and two glasses. The maid has a smirk on her face, which she tries to hide.

ELISABETH

[There must be a mistake. I ordered no wine.]

Sussman appears in the open doorway, smiling as usual.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

13

SUSSMAN

With my compliments, madame.

Elisabeth turns to the maid.

ELISABETH

[Take this away, please.]

The hotel maid, well-tipped by Sussman, sets the tray down on the table, curtsseys and leaves. Sussman comes into the room, to stand by the tray.

ELISABETH

Please leave at once, sir.

Sussman smiles, and begins to open the bottle.

ELISABETH

I ask you again to leave my room,
sir.

Sussman fixes her with his great melting eyes.

SUSSMAN

May I not pay tribute to such
exquisite beauty?

ELISABETH

Must I ring for help?

Sussman holds his lingering look, and then, with a shrug and a smile, he gives up.

SUSSMAN

There will come a time, madame, when
you will wait alone in your room for
a knock on the door, and it will not
come.

Champagne bottle in hand, he leaves, pausing in the doorway to give a last small ironic bow.

14 INT. HOTEL DINING ROOM, DIEPPE - NIGHT

14

Dinner is almost over, and most of the diners have left. Waiters are moving from table to table, clearing away the debris of dinner.

Some way from the few other remaining diners, Charles sits at one table, with Elisabeth behind him at another. They sit back to back, as if they have nothing to do with each other. Charles is looking across the room, through the open double doors to the hotel lobby. There, where some chairs are clustered for the use of guests, he can see Sussman deep in

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED:

14

conversation with the pale single English lady. She seems to welcome his attentions.

Charles sips his wine, and without turning round, speaks to Elisabeth in a low voice.

CHARLES

Is that the man?

ELISABETH

Yes.

She replies in the same manner: as if the conversation is not happening.

CHARLES

You want me to speak to him?

ELISABETH

No.

Charles watches Sussman at work, fascinated, filled with disgust.

CHARLES

Men like that prey on women.

Elisabeth makes no response. They both continue with their dinners. Then:

CHARLES

Perhaps you think I'm no better.

ELISABETH

I think nothing.

CHARLES

You think what we're doing is wrong.

Elisabeth makes no response.

CHARLES

You at least do it for another.

Still Elisabeth says nothing. Charles puts down his glass and eases his chair back, so that he is partly alongside Elisabeth, though still facing the other way. He wants to be sure she hears and understands him.

CHARLES

I too have a duty to another.

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED: (2)

14

Elisabeth turns her head enough for him to see her face, though she still doesn't look at him.

ELISABETH

Then, sir, since neither of us are here for our own pleasure, perhaps what we do isn't so very wrong.

15 INT. HOTEL BEDROOM, DIEPPE - NIGHT

15

Darkness and firelight.

ON ELISABETH'S FACE - She lies as before, head sideways on the pillow, watching something that absorbs and fascinates her.

ELISABETH

(softly)

I don't want to know your name.

She's looking at the reflection in the wardrobe mirror: part of the bed, and Charles's naked body, fire-lit. Her own hands moving slowly over his skin. She's no longer passively enduring what's happening to her: this is the beginning of her own journey. Her own discovery of sexual pleasure.

CLOSE ON HER HANDS - Caressing his back, reaching down towards his buttocks.

ON HER FACE - Gazing into the mirror. The first quiet dawning of desire.

ELISABETH

(softly)

I don't want to know anything about you.

16 EXT. BEACH BOARDWALK, DIEPPE - DAY

16

A strong wind whips up the sand, sending it skittering over the grey boards of the boardwalk. Elisabeth comes into view, walking along the empty beach as she did before. A little way behind her, Charles appears, walking in the same direction, but without giving any sign that he knows her.

At the end of the boardwalk, Elisabeth comes to a stop. Here Charles joins her, standing by her side; like her, looking out to sea. There are no other people anywhere near.

ELISABETH

Aren't you afraid to be seen with me?

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED:

16

CHARLES

There's nobody to see.

Elisabeth lets the wind blow in her face, as she gazes out over the immense expanse of sand and sea.

ELISABETH

I like it here. Just sea and sky.

Charles looks at her, and seems about to say something; but he says nothing. Elisabeth turns her eyes from the seascape to the cliffs and hills of the coast.

17 EXT. CLIFFTOP WALK, DIEPPE - DAY

17

Wind whips over the scrub-covered cliffs, churning the winter sea below, and sending the clouds racing across the sky. Charles and Elisabeth, two small figures in the middle distance, wind their way up a rising path. Sheep graze between the low bushes.

CLOSE NOW, they follow the clifftop path, battling against the wind.

CHARLES

Is the wind too much for you?

ELISABETH

No. I like it.

CHARLES

What?

ELISABETH

(louder)

I like it!

They walk on past an old and crumbling sheep shelter to where the path ends, at the cliff's edge. Here they stand, looking down at the sheer drop down to the roaring sea. On either side, the crumbling overgrown coastline. Elisabeth holds her face to the wind, as if drinking it.

ELISABETH

It makes me want to shout.

CHARLES

What?

ELISABETH

(louder)

The wind. It makes me want to shout!

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED:

17

CHARLES

Then shout. There's nobody to hear.

She does so: not very loudly.

ELISABETH

Ai-ee! Ai-eee!

A glance at Charles, and she tries again. Not much louder.

ELISABETH

Ai-eee-eee!

She falls silent.

ELISABETH

It's not as easy as I thought.

Charles looks away, smiling, unexpectedly touched. Then his smiling face suddenly freezes. He's caught sight of two other WALKERS, distant figures just appeared on the skyline. They're on the same path, and seem to be coming towards them. His eyes reach for a hiding place, and find the derelict sheep shelter.

18 EXT. DERELICT BARN, CLIFFTOP WALK, DIEPPE - DAY

18

Charles throws himself behind the crumbled walls of the long-abandoned roofless shelter, hiding from the walkers. Elisabeth follows, much amused. Here they wait, wind-blown and panting. After a moment, Elisabeth peeps over the wall. She sees the walkers have come no nearer. As she looks, they turn and retrace their steps.

ELISABETH

They've gone.

Charles rises. Elisabeth looks around their hiding place, and sees that they're not alone. Cowering in a far corner is a terrified sheep, staring at them.

ELISABETH

We're being watched.

Charles jumps like a rabbit. He turns, and sees the sheep. As he does so, the sheep bursts into convulsive attempts to get away, but is clearly caught. He looks over the broken-down wall, to confirm for himself that the coast is clear. Then he goes over to the sheep, and murmuring gently, calms her somewhat. Inspection reveals that the sheep's long wool coat has become tangled in a length of briar.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES

She's snared. Hold onto this, will you?

He draws out the end of the briar, and Elisabeth, joining him, does as he asks.

CHARLES

Watch for the thorns.

He grips the sheep expertly under one arm, and with his other hand carefully teases the briar out of the wool. Elisabeth, drawing it out of the way as it comes free, looks on with surprise. It's clear he knows what he's doing.

CHARLES

She's been here some time.

He untangles the last of the briar and releases his hold on the sheep. At once it bolts out of the derelict building to rejoin the flock.

CHARLES

Bad shepherding.

ELISABETH

(smiling)
So it seems.

CHARLES

You're laughing at me.

ELISABETH

Somehow I hadn't expected you to be so very familiar with sheep.

Charles holds her smiling eyes, and speaks with touching directness.

CHARLES

You're very beautiful.

ELISABETH

But then, I know nothing at all about you.

CHARLES

Did you expect it to be like this?

Beat.

ELISABETH

No.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: (2)

18

CHARLES

Tell me it's not just the money.

ELISABETH

It's just the money.

He searches her face, wanting to believe that it's only her pride makes her speak this way.

CHARLES

Last night, in the firelight, I thought - for a moment at least - I thought that you...

He can't quite say it.

ELISABETH

You thought that I liked it?

CHARLES

Did you?

ELISABETH

No.

He looks crest-fallen.

ELISABETH

But I could.

19 INT. HOTEL BEDROOM, DIEPPE - NIGHT

19

Firelight.

CLOSE on Charles's hand, which Elisabeth, lying on the bed, holds in her own hand. Silently she carries it to her cheek, and presses it there, as if to warm herself. Then she slips it down over her neck and shoulder, making it stroke her bare skin; down to the hollow of her throat; and so down over the material of her chemise to her breast. She releases his hand, and he goes on stroking her, unguided. Up her neck and cheek to her lips. On up, to her closed eyes. And down again, over cheek and lips and neck, to her breasts.

ELISABETH

(low)

There...

CLOSE ANGLES

His hand inside her chemise, reaching through the unlaced front, moving over her nipples.

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED:

19

Her head turning sideways, seeking out the reflection in the wardrobe mirror.

IN THE MIRROR - His semi-naked body, lying alongside hers. Her hand reaching for his caressing hand, moving it over her breast the way she wants: harder, stronger.

HER FACE - Looking in the mirror, intensely aroused by what she sees. They begin now to make love.

Charles pushes up on his elbows, wanting to see her face. He lies there, gazing down at her. She lets her hands come to rest on his back and looks up at him. His eyes are filled with wonder. They speak in whispers.

ELISABETH

I wish...

He starts to move again, watching her face. She stops talking, to enjoy the sensations streaming through her body.

CHARLES

What do you wish?

ELISABETH

I wish I could shout.

SLOW MOTION, CLOSE ANGLES - Her head, turning from side to side beneath his.

His head falling, his eyes closing, his cheek coming to rest on the pillow.

Elisabeth turns her head to look in the mirror.

IN THE MIRROR - Charles's face on the pillow, turned away from her, firelit. He's crying.

20 EXT. STEAM PACKET - DAY

20

Gulls wheel and dive in the wake of the ship. Elisabeth stands holding the rails, watching the slow approach of land.

Charles walks up the deck and comes to a stop nearby, giving no sign that he knows her. They speak as before, without appearing to be in conversation.

CHARLES

When the time comes, Mrs Jago will manage everything.

Elisabeth simply nods, to show she's heard.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

20

CHARLES

You can be assured -

ELISABETH

Yes. I know it all.

Silence.

ELISABETH

We made an arrangement. I accept it.

Charles bows his head. He finds it harder to accept than she does.

The ship sounds its steam hooter to alert the harbourmen ahead. On deck there's a general bustle among the CREW, as they prepare for the final approach.

ELISABETH

You won't want to be seen disembarking in my company.

CHARLES

(reluctantly)

No...

ELISABETH

Goodbye, then.

For a moment, neither of them moves. Then Charles turns and walks away down the deck. Elisabeth remains, her hands on the rail, looking across the grey sea to land.

21 INT. BEDROOM, MRS JAGO'S HOUSE, LONDON - DAY

21

Taka-taka-taka... A cluster of ivy leaves, rattling against the panes of an upper window. Elisabeth's hand reaches up INTO FRAME, clutching tightly to a woman's hand, Mrs Jago's hand. Beyond, through the window, the green blur of sunlight on August leaves.

ON ELISABETH'S FACE - Sweat-soaked on the pillow, moving from side to side. An echo of love-making. Her mouth opens, and she cries out, but makes no sound.

WIDER NOW - Four WOMEN, one of them Mrs Jago, clustered round the bed where Elisabeth lies, their backs obscuring what it is they do.

ON ELISABETH'S FACE - Again the silent cry, longer this time. Filled with pain. The cry goes on until it can go on no more, and her head falls back exhausted onto the pillow. Then, out

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED:

21

of the silence, there comes a single small sound: the CREAKING CRY of a new-born baby.

With this cry, other sounds return: Elisabeth's own panting breaths. The bustle of blankets. The soft splash of water. Whispering voices.

MIDWIFE (O.S.)
It's a little girl.

MRS JAGO (O.S.)
Is she all there?

MIDWIFE (O.S.)
Oh, yes. She's beautiful.

MRS JAGO (O.S.)
Best to take her away at once.

WIDE - The group round the bed. Mrs Jago hands a soft blanket-wrapped bundle to one of the women, who carries her away. The creaking cry of the new-born baby fades into the distance, down an unseen stairway.

Mrs Jago mops Elisabeth's brow with a damp cloth.

MRS JAGO
There, my pet. All over now.

CLOSE ON ELISABETH - Staring unseeingly AT CAMERA, eyes filled with unshed tears. She turns, to look out of the window.

ELISABETH'S POV - The ivy leaves, tapping against the window-pane. Taka-taka-taka...

DISSOLVE TO:

22 INT. SCHOOLROOM, LONDON HOUSE - DAY

22

CLOSE on a delicate water-colour painting of ivy leaves, on the first page of a blue-bound sketch-book. Beneath the painting, in immaculate handwriting, the words:

For My English Daughter.

The pages turn, to come to rest on a half-finished drawing of buttercups. A hand enters frame, holding a fine brush, to complete the colouring of the flowers. As this work proceeds, we hear the inquisitive voice of a ten-year-old girl.

GIRL (O.S.)
Miss Laurier?

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED:

22

ELISABETH (O.S.)

Yes?

GIRL (O.S.)

What are you doing?

ELISABETH (O.S.)

Painting.

The hand holding the brush now lays it down and takes up a pen to write beneath the picture:

Your first birthday, darling.

GIRL (O.S.)

Is it for me?

ELISABETH (O.S.)

No. It's for me.

The pen adds a date in the lower corner:

August 10th 1839 CLOSE ON ELISABETH - Looking far away at nothing, deep in her longings. Speaking to herself.

ELISABETH

I don't even know your name.

CLOSE ON the blue-bound sketchbook as the pages turn, to lie open at a painting of snowdrops. Beneath, the words:

Another new year, my darling.

ELISABETH (V.O.)

My darling...

The page turns, to show a painting of a forget-me-not. Beneath, the words:

I don't forget. Wherever you are.

And a date in the lower corner:

AUGUST 10TH 1840

ELISABETH (V.O.)

I don't forget you...

Several pages turn, to come to rest on a painting of a honeysuckle. Beneath, the words:

Six years today. When will I find you?

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED: (2)

22

UP TO FIND Elisabeth, sitting over the sketchbook, eyes looking far away into the distance.

ELISABETH

(softly)

Happy birthday, darling.

23 INT. BALLROOM, LORD CLARE'S HOUSE, LONDON - NIGHT

23

A smiling French DANCE MASTER stands before a quintet of MUSICIANS, at one end of a crowded fashionable ballroom, demonstrating the art of the polka.

DANCE MASTER

First, you stand on one leg, like a goose. Then - left, right, left. And pause. The goose again. And right, left, right. And left, right, left. Four beats, but you dance only three. And one, two, three. And one, two, three.

A brisk signal to the musicians, and a jaunty polka begins. As the music plays, the CAMERA TRACKS BACK through the dancers, GENTLEMEN and LADIES on the cutting edge of fashion. They're unfamiliar with the new dance, but already they love it, and throw themselves into its vivacious rhythms with enthusiasm.

DANCE MASTER

Ladies, let the gentlemen lead! Trust yourself body and soul to the gentlemen! In the polka, faith is the virtue that saves!

The CAMERA EMERGES from the swirl of dancing couples to find Charles Godwin, standing on one side, watching the dance without enthusiasm. He's dressed in town clothes: not at all in the grand ball fashion of the other guests. Beside him stands a man of about thirty, whose dress marks him out as a thorough-going foreigner to smart London society. JOHN TAYLOR is in fact American.

As they watch, an attractive young woman, MRS HURST, accosts Charles with a flirtatious look, and a hand on his arm.

MRS HURST

Shame on you, Mr Godwin. Not dancing?

The Dance Master is calling out above the music:

(CONTINUED)

DANCE MASTER

And one, two, three! And one, two, three!

CHARLES

You'll have to forgive me, Mrs Hurst. I don't know the steps.

MRS HURST

None of us know the steps. That's the fun of it. We learn together.

She speaks with conscious innuendo; as Taylor observes, with silent amusement. Charles, smiling, shakes his head.

CHARLES

As you see, I'm not dressed for dancing.

Before Mrs Hurst can respond, a FASHIONABLE GUEST commandeers her.

FASHIONABLE GUEST

Jenny! I want you! I shall have you!

He sweeps her onto the dance floor. Her eyes hold Charles's as she goes, as if to say: you could have had me.

Charles and Taylor stroll away from the dancing. All around them are groups of guests talking, drinking, laughing, in the sequence of grand rooms given over to the party. It's all too clear that this is a gathering of London's idle amoral upper classes: the kind of party where you never quite know if a lady is a duchess or a courtesan.

Taylor finds it all riveting.

CHARLES

Well, John. Seen enough?

TAYLOR

You have to admit it's quite a sight.

CHARLES

Quite a cost, too.

His roving eyes fall on the host of the party, a handsome genial sixty-year-old grandee, LORD CLARE: Charles's father. By his side is his mistress, MOLLY HOLLAND, a forty-year-old beauty.

CHARLES

Well, there he is. D'you want to meet the old monster?

TAYLOR

Sure.

CHARLES

The lady with him isn't exactly his wife.

TAYLOR

You don't exactly surprise me.

CHARLES

Just the latest in a long line.

Charles and Taylor go up to Lord Clare. Clare stares at his son disapprovingly.

CHARLES

Father, may I -

CLARE

You're not dressed, Charles. Go and get dressed.

CHARLES

Father -

CLARE

You're a blot, boy.

CHARLES

May I introduce my friend Mr John Taylor of Ohio. My father, Lord Clare. Miss Holland.

Taylor bows. Clare looks at him without enthusiasm.

CLARE

What brings you all the way from O-hi-o, sir?

TAYLOR

Your son and I hope to do business together.

CLARE

What business?

TAYLOR

I'm a sheep farmer.

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED: (3)

23

Again, the carefully articulated contempt.

CLARE

A - sheep - farmer.

What more is there to say? Taking Molly's arm, he turns away, murmuring to Charles as he goes:

CLARE

Get dressed, Charles, or get out.
There's a good fellow.

He steers Molly away. John Taylor allows his face to break into a broad grin.

TAYLOR

I wouldn't have missed that for the world.

CHARLES

I wish I could laugh.

He looks round the decadent scene, deeply angry.

CHARLES

This is what's left of my birthright.
Being frittered away on these -
creatures...

Lord Clare and Molly are strolling away in the opposite direction, towards the dancers. They nod and smile at the guests they pass, while conducting a private conversation in an undertone.

CLARE

The boy's not normal. Don't ask me why.

MOLLY

Don't be hard on him, Jimmy. When you think of his poor wife.

CLARE

Damn it, Molly, that was ten years ago! You'd think he'd have found himself some comfort of a female variety by now. But he won't do it.

MOLLY

Are you sure?

CLARE

Quite sure. The boy's not normal.

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED: (4) 23

They come to a stop at the edge of the dance floor. Lord Clare's eyes light up with pleasure at the sight of the dancers swirling to the baton of the little Dance Master.

CLARE

I brought this fellow over from Paris, you know. First polka in London.

He tries out a few steps.

CLARE

Come on, Molly. Let's hop.

He sweeps her into the dance.

24 EXT. SELCOMBE BEACON, SOUTH DOWNS - DAY 24

Slanting winter sunlight falls across the smooth-browed promontory known as Selcombe Beacon: the last shoulder of a long range of treeless chalk hills, and a landmark for miles around. The low light glows on the woolly backs of a flock of sheep, as they move slowly across the hilltop. Sheep-bells clink softly as they go.

25 EXT. SELCOMBE PARK - DAY 25

LOW AND CLOSE on sheep grazing here too, in the park beneath Selcombe Beacon. A station CAB jangles past, very close, scattering the sheep as it goes on its way. As the sheep clear, we see beyond, across the park, a great house set beneath the Downs: Selcombe Place.

26 EXT. ENTRANCE COURTYARD, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 26

The entrance courtyard seen through a first-floor window, as the cab rolls through the archway and pulls up before the main doors of the house.

27 INT. NORTH CORRIDOR, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 27

A handsome forty-year-old lady, CONSTANCE SKELTON, stands at the window with her BACK TO CAMERA, silently watching the new arrival.

28 EXT. ENTRANCE COURTYARD, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 28

A young woman in grey gets out of the cab, her face concealed by her bonnet. She holds a small valise in one hand. The DRIVER, already down from his perch, is fetching her trunk off the high rack. The young woman looks around her, unaware that she's being watched. She turns at last TOWARDS CAMERA. Elisabeth Laurier.

29 INT. GREAT HALL, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

29

A huge largely empty and very cold entrance hall. A big fireplace faces the doors, but the fire in it is burning low. Family portraits hang on the walls; though there is one large space that reveals where a painting once hung and is now gone.

Elisabeth sits shivering on an upright chair, waiting to be seen; her valise by her feet. WILLIAM, a sixty-year-old doorman in livery and wig, stands by the door.

After a moment of silence, William speaks in a conspiratorial whisper, without actually looking at Elisabeth.

WILLIAM

You'd be the new governess.

ELISABETH

Yes.

WILLIAM

Know about the child, do you, miss?

ELISABETH

I know what I've been told.

WILLIAM

Left in a basket on the steps of the Ram Inn. They tell you that?

ELISABETH

No.

WILLIAM

No. They don't tell'em that.

Elisabeth shivers with the cold.

ELISABETH

I don't suppose you could put something on the fire.

WILLIAM

Can't bend, miss. Wig falls off.

Before Elisabeth can take in this strange notion, ELLEN, a dumpy housemaid, comes into the hall. She makes the faintest bob of a curtsy to Elisabeth.

ELLEN

Please to come with me, miss.

30 INT. NORTH STAIRS, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 30

Ellen leads Elisabeth up a curving staircase, from which can be glimpsed many passages and doors.

ELLEN
You'll be the fourth this year, miss.

ELISABETH
The fourth governess?

ELLEN
They don't stay. Miss Louisa sees to that.

She simpers with pleasure at the thought. Like all servants, Ellen resents governesses, because governesses are classed as ladies. Elisabeth's mind is elsewhere.

ELISABETH
(to herself)
Louisa...

31 INT. NURSERY CORRIDOR, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 31

Ellen leads Elisabeth down a corridor onto which open three doors. The first is a lavatory.

ELLEN
Convenience.

The second is a bedroom.

ELLEN
Miss Louisa's room. Twenty-five pounds a year, is it? Your pay?

ELISABETH
Yes.

ELLEN
(with satisfaction)
Cook gets thirty.

On to the third door.

32 INT. GOVERNESS'S ROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 32

Ellen shows Elisabeth into a small plainly-furnished bedroom.

ELLEN
Governess's room.

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED: 32

Elisabeth puts her valise down on the narrow bed.

ELLEN

Thomas'll bring up your trunk. When
he has time.

33 INT. NURSERY CORRIDOR, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 33

On down the corridor. More stairs to the left. A turning to
the right.

ELLEN

We don't get many like you in
Selcombe, miss.

ELISABETH

Like what?

ELLEN

Foreigners, miss. We're all English
here.

They arrive at a closed door.

34 INT. SCHOOLROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 34

The door opens, and Ellen leads Elisabeth into a large light
room.

ELLEN

Schoolroom.

Elisabeth looks round. Windows on two sides. A big work table.
A chalk board. A shelf of books. A globe. No sign of any
teaching in progress. No fire in the grate.

Elisabeth goes to one of the windows, and looks out over the
park.

ELLEN

Know about Miss Louisa, do you, miss?

ELISABETH

She was left in a basket on the steps
of the Ram Inn.

ELLEN

Don't you believe it. The master
bought her from a gypsy. For half-a-
crown.

Elisabeth refuses to react.

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED:

34

ELISABETH

Where is she now?

ELLEN

I wouldn't know, miss. Maybe the gypsies have took her back.

Elisabeth turns to meet Ellen's eyes.

ELISABETH

You don't like Miss Louisa, do you? Why is that?

ELLEN

You'll see.

She gives her token bob of a curtsey, and goes.

35 INT. CORRIDOR TO GLASSHOUSE, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

35

Elisabeth walks down a corridor off which open many doors. She's alone now, finding her way, exploring. One of the doors stands open, and light streams through it into the corridor. She goes to the open door, and for a moment stands there, bathed in light.

36 INT. GLASSHOUSE, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

36

Elisabeth is looking down a long tunnel of glass. She passes through the door into a strangely muted world. A narrow, twenty-yard-long glasshouse, through which runs an enormous ancient vine. The vine is dead, a network of twisted sinews. Many years ago, when the glasshouse was in use, the glass was coated a streaky white against the glare of the sun, and now the interior is washed by an opaque milky light. There are large iron heating pipes running beneath slatted shelving, but one glance reveals that the heating hasn't functioned in a long time. The shelves are bare, the brick floor deep in old leaf mulch. Here and there some glass panes are cracked. But for all its air of abandonment, the glasshouse maintains a powerful atmosphere: a long corridor of light sealed off from the rest of existence.

Elisabeth walks slowly down the unvisited aisle. The whitewash on the glass has worn thin in many places, yielding a blurred and intermittent view of brightness beyond, thus adding to the unreality of the scene. At the end of the glass tunnel, the space opens out into a rectangular chamber, also walled and roofed in milky glass. In the outer wall there is a pair of double doors. Elisabeth goes to the doors and opens them.

37 EXT. LAKE, SELCOMBE PARK - DAY 37

Elisabeth comes out of the glasshouse to find herself on a terrace that bounds a lake. Immediately before her, broad steps drop down to the water. Across the water, perhaps thirty yards away, is a small, elegant, but dilapidated summerhouse, that stands on piles in the middle of the lake. A rowing boat is moored beside it. Through the dusty glass of the lake house windows, the figure of a child can be seen.

After watching for a moment, Elisabeth retreats back into the glasshouse.

38 INT. GLASSHOUSE, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 38

Elisabeth closes the doors softly, and looks round. Sees an old wooden upright chair. Takes the chair, and places it before the streaked glass, where she can see the lake house. Sits down to watch and wait.

ELISABETH'S POV - A blurred view through dusty white streaks of the lake and the lake house. The paint peeling off the glasshouse frame.

DISSOLVE TO:

ELISABETH'S POV - A closer, almost abstract image: white streaks, bright gleams of rippling water, blurred movement. Slowly the images resolve and become comprehensible. A boat moving over the water. A paddle breaking the surface. A child in a white dress.

The boat comes nearer. The child's face enters the clearest section of the glass. Seven years old, pale face, dark hair: not exactly pretty, but fiercely characterful. Elisabeth's first sight of LOUISA.

Elisabeth rises and opens the door.

39 EXT. LAKE, SELCOMBE PARK - DAY 39

Elisabeth stands on the terrace by the glasshouse doorway. Louisa lets her boat glide the last few feet to the terrace steps, staring at Elisabeth all the way. The boat hits the side with a gentle bump.

LOUISA

Who are you?

ELISABETH

Miss Laurier. Your new governess.

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED:

41

CONSTANCE

That's what she does. That's why she
still hasn't learned to read or write.

At the top of the stairs, passages run to left and right. Down the passage from the left comes a servant, THOMAS, carrying a tray. On the tray is a half-consumed bowl of soup, a pipette, and several stained napkins. Elisabeth notes the curious contents of the tray as the servant passes. Constance leads her across the landing to the right.

42 INT. SOUTH CORRIDOR, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

42

Constance leads Elisabeth down the long shadowy corridor.

CONSTANCE

Mr Godwin is in town at present. We
expect him back tomorrow.

ELISABETH

Mrs Godwin -

Constance gives a sharp laugh, as if what Elisabeth has said is rather exciting.

CONSTANCE

Oh, no! I'm not Mrs Godwin. Didn't I
explain? I'm Constance Skelton. My
sister Amelia married Charles, so
she is Mrs Godwin. Then she had her
accident, and I came to help nurse
her. Charles had no-one to run the
house for him. So - A gesture that
says, Here I am.

43 INT. LONG GALLERY, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

43

They enter a long, empty room: a sweep of open space, ninety foot long and twenty foot wide, with paintings all down one side and windows all down the other.

CONSTANCE

The Long Gallery. Impossible to
furnish, so we don't try. Impossible
to keep warm, too. We keep it as an
ambulatory. A place for walking. And
talking.

They walk together down the long room. Constance casts a
curious glance at Elisabeth.

(CONTINUED)

CONSTANCE

We live very quietly here. My sister's accident casts a long shadow.

ELISABETH

This accident. It was long ago?

CONSTANCE

Just after they were married. Almost ten years now.

ELISABETH

It must have been very serious.

CONSTANCE

A riding accident. A bad fall. A broken neck. Nobody to blame. Everybody punished.

(Beat)

I loved her very much.

ELISABETH

You use the past tense.

CONSTANCE

Do I? How observant of you. No, Amy isn't dead. Her life is over, but she lives on. We don't speak of it any more.

Elisabeth goes to one of the windows and looks out over the sweeping approach drive.

ELISABETH

And Miss Louisa?

CONSTANCE

Quite. Adopted, of course.

Elisabeth hardly dares ask more, for fear of betraying her feelings.

CONSTANCE

Charles is a good man. It's like him to take in a foundling child. But no father could love a daughter more.

Elisabeth hears this with intense relief, which she conceals as best as she can.

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED: (2) 43

CONSTANCE

Too much, perhaps. He denies her nothing. As a result, as you have seen, she is - difficult.

ELISABETH

(softly)

I'll do my best for her.

44 INT. LOUISA'S ROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 44

Elisabeth enters the child's bedroom, and stands still. Everywhere she looks, she sees the evidence of Louisa's young life. A doll on the bed. A child's night-dress. A pair of small slippers. A collection of shells.

She reaches out and touches the nightdress, but very carefully, as if afraid to disturb it. All of it is precious to her. All of it infinitely moving.

45 INT. SCHOOLROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT 45

A small case of teaching materials stands open on the table. A cluster of little jars of water-colour paint. Paint brushes, sheets of card, books, pencils, inks, pens. Elisabeth is standing, pinning strips of card to the walls in a running line, at the height of a child's eyes. The strips have words on them, painted in clear black letters, the first letter of each word capitalised. The sequence begins:

A Bonny Child Does Everything For God...

46 INT. DINING ROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT 46

Constance and Elisabeth dine alone together at a candelit table, attended by Thomas. Elisabeth's attention is on the ram's head crest embossed on the silver fork by her plate.

CONSTANCE

The family crest. You'll find it all over the place. The family fortune was built on sheep. Long ago, of course. Thank you, Thomas.

Thomas bows and leaves.

CONSTANCE

One generation makes the money, the next spends it. Charles's father has spent it. You'll meet him soon enough, when he comes down for Christmas. He'll approve of you.

(CONTINUED)

46 CONTINUED:

46

ELISABETH

Why?

CONSTANCE

Because you're French.

ELISABETH

Swiss.

CONSTANCE

And because you're very pretty.

She looks at Elisabeth with her direct gaze. Elisabeth doesn't know what to say.

CONSTANCE

So tell me, Miss Laurier. Why are you here?

The bluntness of the question throws Elisabeth again. She plays for time.

ELISABETH

You mean, in England?

CONSTANCE

Why in England? Why a governess? You must have had offers. Of marriage, I mean.

ELISABETH

Am I to marry just because I'm asked?

CONSTANCE

Most ladies do. Unless, of course, their affections are already engaged.

She looks intently at Elisabeth, a wry half-smile on her lips. Speaking indirectly about herself.

CONSTANCE

I do hope you're not one of those women who give their hearts to men they can never marry. So, so stupid.

47 INT. LOUISA'S BEDROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT

47

Louisa lies asleep. Elisabeth stands silently by her bedside, a candle in her hand. In sleep, by candlelight, Louisa is innocent, and touchingly vulnerable.

Elisabeth bends down and gives her a soft kiss.

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED: 47

ELISABETH
Goodnight, darling.

48 EXT. SELCOMBE PARK - DAY 48

A pale sun rising over Selcombe Beacon, its light rimming the edge of the Downs. Dispersing the mist that lingers over the park, and around the great house.

49 INT. SCHOOLROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 49

Elisabeth sits at the table, her pots of paint arrayed before her. For each colour she has a little jar in which she dilutes the paint, and the morning light, passing through the coloured water, casts pink and gold and blue pools across the white card. Before her as she works are a number of word-strips, brought with her from previous schoolrooms: each one bearing a word in clear black letters, accompanied at the end by a small brightly-coloured image representing the word's meaning. Some, like Tree and Dog, are obvious enough. The verbs are harder - Go has a little man walking, See has an eye, Love has a red heart emitting pink rays. One strip has on it Miss Laurier, beside a comical image of a dour governess. Now Elisabeth is creating Louisa: a little picture of a dark-haired girl in a white dress.

Louisa herself enters.

ELISABETH
Good morning, Louisa.

Louisa doesn't answer. Elisabeth goes on with her painting. When Louisa realises Elisabeth is paying her no attention, she comes in and looks round. She studies the words pinned round the walls -

... Headstrong Ignorant Juveniles Keep Low Manners, Never Obey Papa ...

and so makes her way to a point from which she can look over Elisabeth's shoulder at what she's doing. She's curious, but doesn't want to admit it.

ELISABETH
Do you know your ABC?

Louisa parrots the words back in a soft but maddening voice, mimicking Elisabeth's accent.

LOUISA
"Do you know your ABC?"

(CONTINUED)

49 CONTINUED:

49

ELISABETH
This is L for Louisa.

LOUISA
"This is L for Louisa."

She moves away again, towards the door.

ELISABETH
Don't go. We have work to do.

LOUISA
"Don't go. We have work to do."

Elisabeth lays down her brush and looks up to meet the child's mocking eyes. Louisa waits for her to speak, but she doesn't.

LOUISA
You're poor, I suppose.

ELISABETH
Yes.

LOUISA
I don't have to do what you say.

She walks out of the room.

50 EXT. DRIVE, SELCOMBE PARK - DAY

50

Louisa stands on a low column at the end of a wall, where the drive makes a turn towards the house. She has no outdoor coat on. She looks steadily down the drive that curves through trees to the distant park gates.

51 INT. LONG GALLERY, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

51

Elisabeth stands at one of the windows, looking out. Dwarfed by the immense room.

ELISABETH'S POV - Louisa waiting in the drive, like a statue on a plinth.

52 EXT. DRIVE, SELCOMBE PARK - DAY

52

ON LOUISA - Her sharp stubborn little face, gazing into the distance. From far off, the sound of horses' hooves. Carriage wheels.

LOUISA
(soft)
Papa...

(CONTINUED)

- 52 CONTINUED: 52
A light rain starts to fall.
- 53 INT. LONG GALLERY, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 53
Elisabeth at the window, looking out.
ELISABETH'S POV - A two-horse CARRIAGE coming down the drive through the rain. Louisa waiting on her column.
At a fork in the drive, the carriage stops, and a man gets out. It's Charles Godwin, but at this distance, Elisabeth can't make out any details. He walks down the drive in the rain, towards Louisa on her column. Behind Charles, a second man, John Taylor, has climbed out of the carriage, and follows more slowly. The carriage rolls off down the other fork of the drive, to the stable block.
Charles reaches Louisa, and standing with his back to the column, raises his hands high. Unhesitatingly, she steps off the column and onto his shoulders, grasping his hands tight to balance herself. Clearly this is a little ritual they've been through many times before.
- 54 EXT. DRIVE, SELCOMBE PARK - DAY 54
FOREGROUND, John Taylor, walking slowly towards the house, smiling. Beyond him, now passing through the archway, the curious sight of Charles, with Louisa standing on his shoulders, heading home in the rain. He proceeds with slow strides, careful not to dislodge her, and she laughs at the sheer thrill of it, and with happiness at having her father back.
- 55 EXT. ENTRANCE COURTYARD, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 55
Constance on the steps, as Charles and Louisa come through the archway. A heightened colour in Constance's cheeks. Rain falling steadily now.
- 56 INT. NORTH CORRIDOR, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 56
Elisabeth makes her way back down the corridor. Through the windows, she sees the bustle of activity in the rainy courtyard below. William and Thomas have hurried out with umbrellas, and all Elisabeth sees is Louisa, now on the ground again, and the backs of two gentlemen, who are Charles and John Taylor, as they enter the Great Hall.
- 57 INT. SOUTH STAIRS, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 57
Elisabeth stands motionless by the balustrade on the upper landing. Below her, through the open double doors, we can see something of the group of travellers in the Great Hall,

(CONTINUED)

as they meet Constance, MRS MAIDMENT, the housekeeper, and ROBERT AMES, the farm manager. They are relieved of their wet hats and coats, and head across the hall towards the South Stairs. We still can't see the gentlemen's faces, but their voices carry clearly enough.

CHARLES

I didn't mean you to get wet, John.
The carriage would have brought you
to the door.

TAYLOR

A little rain never hurt me.

CONSTANCE

Charles, you're soaked. You must
change.

CHARLES

Oh, I'm alright. Louisa's the one
who needs dry clothes.

LOUISA

I want to stay with you.

CHARLES

Now, John, here's a man you must get
to know. This is Robert Ames, my
farm manager. John Taylor, of Ohio.
Mr Taylor's looking to buy some
pedigree Southdowns.

TAYLOR

Mr Ames.

AMES

Do you have experience of Southdowns,
sir?

TAYLOR

Not yet. We run Merinos.

Now they're coming through the double doors. Elisabeth stays motionless by the balustrade, looking down.

ELISABETH'S POV - Charles, moving across the hall below, entirely unaware of her gaze. She hasn't seen him for eight years, but he's changed very little. Louisa holds him tight by the hand.

57 CONTINUED: (2)

57

CHARLES

Wait till you bring in the Southdowns.
We run two to an acre here. There's
no hardier breed in existence.

CONSTANCE

We have a new governess, Charles.

CHARLES

Not another one!

He swings Louisa up into his arms, displaying her to Taylor.

CHARLES

Look at this child. A little wet and
wild, maybe, but is she so very
frightening? And yet they all run
from her, squealing.

CONSTANCE

(to Mrs Maidment)

Mr Taylor will be in the East Room.
And send Miss Laurier down, to meet
the master.

Mrs Maidment bobs and goes back into the Great Hall, unaware
that Elisabeth is above. The others pass out of Elisabeth's
sight into the Sitting Room.

58 INT. SITTING ROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

58

Charles, carrying Louisa, leads Taylor, Constance and Robert
Ames into the long ground-floor room, with its two pillared
ends. A fire burns in the grate, and instinctively they all
gravitate towards its warmth.

LOUISA

I don't want a governess.

CHARLES

"I don't want a governess."

He rubs his face against hers, making her laugh.

LOUISA

Did you miss me?

CHARLES

Not for one single moment. Especially
when you stand out in the rain like
that, getting all cold and wet like
a fish.

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED:

58

He rumples her wet hair, and kisses her.

LOUISA

I don't like it when you go away.

Elisabeth appears in the open doorway from the hall. She stands here, unnoticed by any of the group round the fire. Her eyes on Charles, who still has Louisa in his arms. She sees him kiss Louisa again. Sees the love on his face.

CHARLES

Nor do I, darling. But I've come home now.

TAYLOR

(to Robert Ames)

You must give me some breeding tips, Mr Ames. I mean to win prizes.

AMES

Mr Godwin's your man. He's our master breeder.

Charles puts Louisa down, close to the fire.

CHARLES

warn you, John. This breeding business can become something of an obsession. It's one endless pursuit of -

Straightening up again, he sees Elisabeth.

CHARLES

Perfection.

He's thunderstruck. He stares and stares. She looks back at him without speaking.

TAYLOR

How close do you reckon you've got? To perfection, I mean.

AMES

The Selcombe flock is as good as you'll find, sir.

TAYLOR

That's what I hear. What's your secret?

Charles is staring at Elisabeth, too stunned to take in what Taylor is saying. Constance now turns, and sees Elisabeth.

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED: (2)

58

CONSTANCE

Ah, here's the new governess.

Charles stares and stares. Elisabeth comes forward. Louisa twists away behind Charles's legs.

CONSTANCE

My brother-in-law, Mr Godwin. Miss Laurier.

Elisabeth makes a small curtsy. Taylor looks on her with interest.

ELISABETH

Mr Godwin.

CONSTANCE

Miss Laurier's from Switzerland. But she's been employed in England for many years.

CHARLES

I see.

He pulls himself out of his state of shock, and turns away with a frown.

CHARLES

I'm sure Mr Taylor needs something to drink. I know I do.

59 INT. LIBRARY, SELCOMBE PARK - DUSK

59

Dusk is gathering outside the library windows. The book-lined room is in shadow, the lamps not yet lit.

Elisabeth stands alone in the middle of the room. The door from the sitting room opens, and Charles enters. He closes the door after him. A glance at Elisabeth, and he walks past her, as if wanting to look out of one of the windows. He's deeply disturbed.

CHARLES

You must go, of course. You must leave at once. Don't you know that if there were any hint of our - our arrangement - I and my family would be shut out of all respectable society? I will not subject my wife to that shame. I will not ruin my daughter's only chance of happiness. What possessed you to come here?

(CONTINUED)

59 CONTINUED:

59

Elisabeth has had time to prepare for this moment. Her voice is low but determined.

ELISABETH

It's taken me seven years to trace my child. Don't ask me to leave her now.

CHARLES

We had an agreement. You had your money.

ELISABETH

I didn't know how it would be when she was born. All I heard was her cry. I've never forgotten it.

CHARLES

You were paid to forget.

ELISABETH

I tried.

Charles turns to look at her, filled with bitterness.

CHARLES

You tried? But of course. I remember. Your father's a gambler and a pauper. Why should you have any sense of honour?

Elisabeth's eyes flash with anger.

ELISABETH

Yes, my father was a gambler and a pauper. He was also a sweet, gentle, innocent man, who never hurt anybody in his life. Your £500 bought him freedom, and peace at the end. He died penniless, with every debt paid in full. I call that a sense of honour.

Charles is taken aback by her passion. To cover his confusion, he turns away again, to look out at the twilit park.

CHARLES

I wanted an heir. I wanted a child of my own. Is that so wrong?

(CONTINUED)

59 CONTINUED: (2)

59

ELISABETH

I swear to you, no-one will ever learn the truth from me. Not even Louisa.

CHARLES

Not even your own child? You could never live with that.

ELISABETH

I have no choice. I have no home of my own. I can't live under your roof as Louisa's mother. I must be governess to her, or nothing.

CHARLES

She hates governesses.

ELISABETH

She needs me. That's enough.

Charles stares at her. Then abruptly shakes his head.

CHARLES

No. No! It's impossible! The whole thing - You must go, and there's an end to it.

60 INT. SITTING ROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

60

Charles strides into the sitting room, where Constance, John Taylor and Robert Ames are now taking tea. He goes to fetch himself something to drink, using the cover of the tea-things to make what he hopes is a throw-away remark.

CHARLES

You'll have to get another governess, Connie. Miss Laurier can't stay.

Constance stares at Charles in surprise.

CONSTANCE

Why?

CHARLES

Louisa doesn't like her.

CONSTANCE

Charles, Louisa doesn't like any governess.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES

Can't a man choose who's to educate
his own daughter?

Constance raises her eyebrows. She has her own notions as to
what's troubling Charles, but she keeps them to herself.

CONSTANCE

Do you wish her to be dismissed
without a character?

CHARLES

No, no.

CONSTANCE

Then she must be given at least a
month's notice.

CHARLES

A month! Can't she just be paid?

CONSTANCE

Governesses make their homes with
their employers. She can't leave
until she's found a new situation.

CHARLES

A month! A month is an eternity.

TAYLOR

Does she really have no home but
this?

CONSTANCE

That's why governesses are
governesses.

TAYLOR

What happens to them when they aren't
wanted as governesses any more?

CONSTANCE

I really don't know.

Charles has taken his tea close to the fire for warmth.

CHARLES

All these great rooms, and we live
our lives within three feet of the
fire.

61 INT. SCHOOLROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 61

Elisabeth sits close to the fire. A tap, and the door opens. Charles in the doorway.

CHARLES
Come with me, please.

62 INT. NURSERY CORRIDOR, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 62

Charles leads Elisabeth down the corridor. He speaks quietly to her as she follows him, not turning to look at her.

CHARLES
You're to have one month's notice. I must know that I can trust you. You said you'd swear to tell no-one.

ELISABETH
Yes.

CHARLES
Then you shall do so.

63 INT. AMY GODWIN'S ROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 63

A dark stifflingly hot bedroom. A fire roaring in the grate. Shuttered windows. HANNAH, the nurse, sitting in an armchair, sewing by lamplight.

FOREGROUND, shadowy and OUT OF FOCUS, the head of a high bed, mounded with quilts.

Charles enters the room, followed by Elisabeth. Hannah rises.

CHARLES
Alright, Hannah. You can go.

HANNAH
Have I time for my tea, sir?

CHARLES
I'll stay till you return.

Hannah gives a respectful bob, and takes herself off. Charles comes to the bedside, beckoning to Elisabeth to follow.

CHARLES
Amy, my dearest. I've brought someone to see you.

Elisabeth stares. What seemed to be the bedhead slowly moves.

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED:

63

There on the high bed, propped up by pillows and covered by quilts, lies AMY GODWIN: once lovely, once young, now all skin and bone and blankly staring eyes. Slowly, slowly, her gaunt head is turning towards them. Her eyes seem to find them: but there are no signs of comprehension there.

Charles leans forward and kisses her pale cheek, with infinite tenderness.

CHARLES

This is Miss Laurier.
(to Elisabeth)
This is my wife, Amelia.

ELISABETH

Mrs Godwin.

The blank eyes drift away once more.

CHARLES

I've known Amy all my life. Always loved her. Always knew I'd marry her. You should have seen her before. She had such a smile, it made you warm just to be near her... We were happy together. And then - it ended.

He strokes his wife's hair. Turns to Elisabeth.

CHARLES

I tell Amy everything. She knows Louisa's my daughter. But I've promised her I'll never shame her before the world. No-one else knows. Except you.

ELISABETH

Does she understand what we say?

CHARLES

I choose to believe that she does.

Elisabeth watches Amy's face. Slowly the blank eyes are returning to meet her.

CHARLES

Give me your hand.

Elisabeth gives him her hand. He takes it and rests it on the bedclothes, where she can feel the thin body beneath.

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED: (2)

63

CHARLES

If there's any pity in you for my wife's wasted life, swear that you'll keep our secret.

ELISABETH

I swear.

CHARLES

Now leave me.

Elisabeth leaves. As she turns to close the door behind her, she looks back and sees Charles on his knees by the bed, one arm round his wife, his face pressed to the bedcovers. Amy sits against her pillows and stares over his head at nothing.

64 EXT. LAKE, SELCOMBE PARK - DAY

64

Early morning. The rising sun reflected in the wind-ruffled waters of the lake, and glinting on the windows of the lake house.

Charles is swimming in the lake. He drives his body through the cold water at speed. Swings himself out onto the terrace steps, where his towel and bath-robe hang over a handrail. He is naked.

65 INT. GLASSHOUSE, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

65

Elisabeth stands in the open door from the corridor, looking down the length of the glasshouse. Charles, now dressed in his bath-robe, towel over his shoulders, has just entered the glasshouse, and is closing the double doors. He turns and strides barefoot down the glass tunnel to the house. Elisabeth is gone.

66 INT. SCHOOLROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

66

Elisabeth walks round the room, reading out loud the sequence of words pinned to the walls. Louisa sits at the table listening, her face a mocking parody of the attentive pupil.

ELISABETH

"A bonny child does everything for God. Headstrong ignorant juveniles keep low manners, never obey papa, question religion's sacred truths, until virtue, withering, expires. Yea, Zion!"

LOUISA

"Yea, Zion!"

(CONTINUED)

66 CONTINUED:

66

ELISABETH

There's something special about those words. Can you guess what it is?

Louisa shakes her head, eyes wide.

ELISABETH

Look more closely. See if you can spot it.

Louisa gets up. At first, she pretends to be studying the words on the wall. Then, mockingly, she presses her nose to them as she passes along the wall towards the door.

ELISABETH

Louisa. I want you to stay.

Back comes the mocking echo.

LOUISA

"Louisa, I want you to stay."

She goes out.

67 INT. GREAT BARN, SELCOMBE PARK - DAY

67

A flock of some fifty Southdown sheep are tightly penned in a ring of hurdles in the great brick-walled space. CLEM DULY, the old shepherd, stands by with his dog, shifting the sheep one by one as they're released, from one pen into another. He's assisted by DAVEY, a skilled young farmhand. Clem Duly has a brisk way with the sheep, murmuring under his breath as he hustles them along:

CLEM

Bugger away, lady. Bugger away.

In the middle of the scrum of sheep, immersed in wool as if in sea-froth, stands Charles Godwin, inspecting the flock sheep by sheep. John Taylor stands close by, watching with keen attention.

Charles's inspection is thorough indeed. He presses his hands to the sheep's back, embraces the barrel of its body, sinks to the ground to examine the under-body, and, touchingly, kneels before the animal to look into its eyes. Then comes the verdict.

CHARLES

No. You see why?

(CONTINUED)

TAYLOR

Frankly, I don't. They all look good to me. You've a superb flock here.

CHARLES

So I should have. I've been breeding out the imperfections for fifteen years now.

He plunges his hands into the thick wool of another sheep. As he speaks to Taylor, Elisabeth approaches from the farmyard outside, and stands in the arched entrance. At first she's unseen by the two men.

CHARLES

Now this one's a perfect breeding ewe. See how the chine runs straight, from the neck to the setting of the tail? Good wide hips. Straight forelegs. Well-wooled between the ears. Look into the face. A sweet, quiet disposition. She'll feed well, fatten well, and lamb well.

He looks up and sees Elisabeth, silhouetted against the daylight. He's overwhelmed with embarrassment: all too aware of the application of what he's said to his own selection of Elisabeth, for breeding purposes. Taylor too turns and sees Elisabeth. Admiring attention shows on his face.

TAYLOR

Good morning, Miss Laurier.

ELISABETH

Mr Taylor.

She enters the great covered space.

TAYLOR

Have you come to admire the Southdowns too?

ELISABETH

No, sir. I've come for Mr Godwin's instructions.

Charles stands up and rubs his oily hands on his trousers.

CHARLES

Well?

(CONTINUED)

67 CONTINUED: (2)

67

ELISABETH

Am I to teach Miss Louisa, sir? Even if only for one month.

CHARLES

Yes.

ELISABETH

Then I must be able to keep her in the schoolroom. What forms of discipline am I permitted to use?

CHARLES

None. If her lessons give her no pleasure, why should she endure them? She'll find out soon enough what a hard world we live in. For these few short years she's under my care, I want her to be happy. Is that clear?

Elisabeth gives Charles a long look, that makes plain she doesn't agree with him. But she doesn't argue.

ELISABETH

Yes, sir.

68 INT. HOUSEKEEPER'S ROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

68

Inside a large key cupboard. Mrs Maidment's plump fingers hunting through a great rack of keys.

MRS MAIDMENT

I know we have it somewhere. You've asked the master, of course?

ELISABETH

Yes. I've asked the master.

MRS MAIDMENT

(lower)

You know about the child, do you?

ELISABETH

What about the child?

MRS MAIDMENT

Seed of the Devil. He does that, the Devil does. Finds poor girls to lie with, gets them with child - Here it is. The schoolroom key.

She unhooks a key and gives it to Elisabeth.

(CONTINUED)

68 CONTINUED:

68

MRS MAIDMENT

The day she was brought into this house as a little baby, seven years ago, screech-screech! The butter wouldn't set. True as I'm standing here.

ELISABETH

She was crying?

MRS MAIDMENT

Screaming her evil little head off.

69 INT. SCHOOLROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

69

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Louisa beats the schoolroom door, pulls at the handle, screaming with fury. Terrifying violent screams that echo round the house.

LOUISA

Let me out! Papa! I want papa! Let me out!

Elisabeth is at the table, calmly proceeding with her illustrated word-strips.

ELISABETH

After you've done your lessons.

70 INT. NURSERY CORRIDOR, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

70

Ellen stands at the end of the corridor, listening to Louisa's screams, and hugging herself with delight. The more desperate the shrieks, the more delicious her sensations.

71 EXT. SELCOMBE BEACON - DAY

71

Charles and John Taylor, both on horseback, ride over the great bald brow of Selcombe Beacon. Charles is showing Taylor his land and his sheep. A flock of Southdowns graze nearby.

Taylor looks round as he rides. The views are magnificent: north over the great Sussex weald, and south out to sea.

TAYLOR

Fine country. Very fine.

CHARLES

I know every hill and every hollow. This is real sheep country.

(CONTINUED)

71 CONTINUED:

71

TAYLOR

You should see the Muskingum valley.
Like an ocean of grass.

They reach the tip of the long shoulder of Downs. Charles points to the sea.

CHARLES

In 1588, the Spanish Armada sailed over the horizon, there. The men of Selcombe lit a warning beacon here, one of a chain of beacons, all down the south coast to Plymouth, where Sir Francis Drake was waiting with the fleet. My family lived here then, just as we do now.

TAYLOR

Long time.

CHARLES

Yes. Long time.

72 INT. GREAT HALL, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

72

William opens the door to Charles and Taylor, just returned from their ride. In the distance, Louisa can be heard, still screaming.

CHARLES

What in God's name is that?

WILLIAM

(with satisfaction)
Miss Louisa, sir. Being educated.

73 INT. NURSERY CORRIDOR, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

73

Charles rattles the schoolroom door. Louisa's screams continue, though not as strong as they were at the beginning. He realises the door is locked.

CHARLES

Miss Laurier! Open this door!

Louisa, hearing her father's voice, cries out to him from inside.

LOUISA (O.S.)

Papa! Help me! Papa! I want you!

CHARLES

Open this door at once!

(CONTINUED)

73 CONTINUED:

73

The door opens, and Elisabeth comes out. She's closed and locked it behind her before Charles realises her intentions. He's enraged.

CHARLES

What the devil do you think you're doing? Unlock this door!

ELISABETH

No, sir.

He makes a lunge for the key. She puts it behind her back, and an undignified scuffle takes place, in which his body presses against hers. Louisa's cries continue.

LOUISA (O.S.)

Papa! I want you!

CHARLES

I will not have you treat my daughter like this!

ELISABETH

Would you have her grow up ignorant and friendless?

CHARLES

I'll not have her imprisoned!

LOUISA (O.S.)

Papa! Papa!

ELISABETH

She cares for no-one but you, and so no-one cares for her.

CHARLES

Give me that key!

ELISABETH

She's unhappy, and lonely. She doesn't know who she is, or what she's to do, or why.

Panting, Charles stops his attempts to wrestle the key from Elisabeth, and stands, face flushed, staring at her.

LOUISA (O.S.)

Papa... Papa...

(CONTINUED)

ELISABETH

I can help her. I know I can. But first, she has to be taught to obey me.

CHARLES

If you hurt so much as one hair of her head -

ELISABETH

Do you think I, of all people, would ever hurt her?

Locked eyes. She's reminding him: I'm her mother.

ELISABETH

I make you a promise. Whatever I do to Louisa, I'll do to myself.

Charles stares at her. From beyond the door, Louisa's pitiful voice.

LOUISA (O.S.)

Papa... I love you...

ELISABETH

You want her to love you. I want her to be loved.

This hits home. Charles draws a long breath.

ELISABETH

She won't have you for ever.

Charles holds Elisabeth's eyes a moment longer. Then he speaks to Louisa beyond the locked door.

CHARLES

Louisa, darling. I'll see you when your lessons are over. Be a good girl, darling. I love you.

Elisabeth unlocks the door and goes back into the schoolroom, closing the door after her. Charles remains where he is, staring at the closed door. The sound of the key turning in the lock. Then Louisa's screaming voice.

LOUISA (O.S.)

Get away from me! I hate you! I'll kill you!

74 INT. NORTH STAIRS, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 74

A distant clock strikes noon. Ellen comes up the stairs carrying a tray of lunch to the schoolroom.

75 INT. SCHOOLROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 75

Louisa lies on the floor before the fire, silent now. Elisabeth sits at the table, painting words.

A tap at the door.

ELLEN (O.S.)

Lunch, miss.

Elisabeth goes to the door, drawing the key from her pocket. She unlocks the door and opens it.

ELISABETH

Thank you, Ellen. Put it on the table.

Ellen carries in the tray, her inquisitive eyes looking round to see what's happening in the room. She lays down the tray on the table.

ELLEN

Will that be all, miss?

ELISABETH

Yes, thank you, Ellen.

Ellen leaves. Elisabeth closes the door after her. She lays out the dishes: a plate of shepherd's pie each, a bowl of rice pudding each, and two glasses of water.

ELISABETH

Do you want your lunch, Louisa?

Louisa turns and looks. Slowly she rises from the floor, and comes to the table. She picks up the plate of shepherd's pie, fixes Elisabeth with her blankest gaze, and hurls it at the locked door.

76 INT. NURSERY CORRIDOR, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 76

Ellen, waiting outside by the door, her back to the wall, jumps as she hears the plate hit the door.

ELLEN

One.

77 INT. SCHOOLROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 77

Crash! The rice pudding follows. The sticky mess slithers down the door to the floor.

78 INT. NURSERY CORRIDOR, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 78

ELLEN

Two.

A beatific smile spreads over her face.

79 INT. SCHOOLROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 79

Elisabeth returns her own plate and bowl to the tray, untouched.

ELISABETH

If you won't eat, then neither will I.

80 EXT. SELCOMBE BEACON - DAY 80

The sun sinking in the sky. The sheep drifting slowly across the flank of the hills, casting long shadows.

81 INT. NURSERY CORRIDOR, SELCOMBE PLACE - DUSK 81

The empty corridor. The closed schoolroom door. The CAMERA EASES BACK to discover Mrs Maidment, Ellen and Thomas, standing in a silent row, backs to the wall, trying to hear what's going on inside. A faint THUMP from within. A discreet ripple of approval passes over their faces.

82 INT. BILLIARD ROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DUSK 82

Charles stands, holding his cue, looking out of the window at the shadows forming in the park. John Taylor is at the billiard table behind him, playing with skill.

CHARLES

I don't know that I can take much more of this.

TAYLOR

I'd say you're lucky to have her.

CHARLES

Why?

TAYLOR

She's got pride in herself. Doesn't back down.

(CONTINUED)

82 CONTINUED:

82

He takes a shot.

TAYLOR
And she's lovely.

Charles says nothing. Taylor concentrates on his game, trying to sound casual.

TAYLOR
Don't tell me you haven't noticed.

CHARLES
I've noticed.

TAYLOR
Isn't there some old custom, that the master of the house can have any woman he likes?

Charles smiles a little bitterly.

CHARLES
I don't think so.

TAYLOR
I wouldn't blame you. You're still a young man. You have to think of yourself.

This touches Charles on a raw nerve.

CHARLES
Do I? Do I, John? Do I have to "think of myself"?

TAYLOR
I only meant -

CHARLES
(furious)
That's what men do, is it? "Think of themselves"? My father thought of himself. Year after year, I watched him humiliate my mother, because he "thought of himself". Do you expect me to do that to my wife?

TAYLOR
No, no. Of course not.

An awkward silence.

(CONTINUED)

TAYLOR

I'm sorry, Charles. I didn't mean to distress you.

CHARLES

Miss Laurier is employed to teach my daughter. She leaves at the end of the month.

TAYLOR

Sure. I've got the picture.

He concentrates on his game. Then, trying to sound casual:

TAYLOR

So you won't mind if I speak to her myself?

CHARLES

Speak to her? What do you mean?

TAYLOR

Well, she doesn't seem to have a home of her own.

CHARLES

You mean to employ her?

TAYLOR

Not exactly. I was thinking of marriage.

CHARLES

Marriage!

TAYLOR

I could do a lot worse.

He misses his shot, and stands up from the table. Charles goes to take his place. Taylor's suggestion has thrown him into a state of confusion, which he does his best to hide.

TAYLOR

What do you think?

CHARLES

I don't know. It seems rather sudden.

TAYLOR

I leave tomorrow. I don't have that much time.

(CONTINUED)

82 CONTINUED: (3)

82

CHARLES

You'd better ask her, then.

He makes his shot: a hard one, and a bad one.

CHARLES

Damn!

83 INT. SCHOOLROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DUSK

83

The fire has almost burned down to nothing. Louisa sits cross-legged before it, shivering.

LOUISA

I'm cold.

Elisabeth at the table, making her word-strips by lamp-light.

ELISABETH

So am I.

LOUISA

I hate you.

ELISABETH

Hate me if you want. But you must obey me.

LOUISA

You can't make me. I'll die first.

ELISABETH

How will you die?

LOUISA

I'll drown myself in the lake.

ELISABETH

How will you make your body stay under water?

LOUISA

It just will.

ELISABETH

No, it won't. Bodies float.

Louisa frowns, and retreats into a sullen silence.

ELISABETH

You could put stones in your pockets.
Do you have any pockets?

(CONTINUED)

LOUISA
Don't talk to me.

ELISABETH
Or you could get a good strong bag,
and fill it with -

LOUISA
I said, Don't talk to me!

ELISABETH
What do you do in the lake house?

LOUISA
(exploding)
You keep away! If you come near it,
I'll kill you! I'll murder you!

ELISABETH
How?

LOUISA
With a knife! I'll stab your heart!

ELISABETH
Yes. That would do it.

Louisa stares at her. Somehow this admission by Elisabeth mollifies her.

LOUISA
It would. You'd be dead.

ELISABETH
You'd have to bury me.

LOUISA
I wouldn't. I'd just leave you.

ELISABETH
I'd rot. I'd smell.

LOUISA
Serve you right.

Silence. Louisa watches Elisabeth painting away. Then:

LOUISA
What are these stupid lessons, anyway?

84 INT. LONG GALLERY, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT

84

No fire. Only one lamp in all the long space. Here, in the darkness, Charles paces up and down, suffering. His valet Carlo enters.

CARLO

Drinks are being served, sir. Madam asks for you.

CHARLES

I can't come yet, Carlo. Tell them I'll join them when it's over.

85 INT. SCHOOLROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT

85

Louisa stands by the table on which Elisabeth has laid out her illustrated word-strips. She's looking at a row laid out in the lamp-light:

Louisa - loves - papa.

ELISABETH

"Louisa loves papa."

She looks through the other word-strips, and replaces papa with grass.

ELISABETH

"Louisa loves grass."

She changes the word-strips again, replacing loves with eats. This word is comically illustrated by a toothy mouth eating a sausage.

ELISABETH

"Louisa eats grass."

A flicker of a smile on Louisa's face; as quickly wiped off. Elisabeth replaces Louisa with sheep.

ELISABETH

"Sheep eats grass."

Louisa reaches out and makes her own sentence.

Papa - loves - sheep Elisabeth can't help smiling; but she's careful not to look up.

(CONTINUED)

ELISABETH

"Papa loves sheep." See? It's not hard.

Now she looks up, meets Louisa's eyes. Louisa stares back, but gives nothing away. Elisabeth rises, goes to the fire, puts more coal on it. She looks up at the clock on the mantelpiece. Almost six. Then back down to the fire.

ELISABETH

Do you know about firelight?

LOUISA

What about it?

ELISABETH

It's a kind of magic. Firelight makes time stand still. When you put out the lamps, and sit in the firelight's glow, there aren't any rules any more.

She blows out the lamp. Only firelight now. Louisa looks and listens, secretly fascinated.

ELISABETH

You can do what you want. Say what you want. Be what you want. When the lamps are lit again, time starts again, and everything you said or did is forgotten. More than forgotten. It never happened.

Louisa looks from Elisabeth to the fire and back.

LOUISA

I can do what I want?

ELISABETH

Yes.

LOUISA

I want to go.

ELISABETH

Then go.

Louisa looks at the door, and back to Elisabeth, her eyes saying: but the door's locked.

ELISABETH

It's been unlocked since lunchtime.

(CONTINUED)

85 CONTINUED: (2) 85

Louisa goes to the door and turns the handle. The door opens. One last look back at Elisabeth in the firelight, and she's gone.

86 INT. LONG GALLERY, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT 86

Louisa runs the length of the Long Gallery into Charles's arms. Still just the one lamp in the great shadowy space. Charles sweeps her up into a tight, tight hug, kissing her, telling her without words how he'll always love her.

Then over Louisa's shoulder, out in the shadowy corridor, he sees Elisabeth, standing watching them. He looks at her. She looks back, unmoving.

87 INT. DINING ROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT 87

Charles, Taylor, Constance and Elisabeth at the candlelit dining table. Elisabeth wears an evening dress in place of her governess's uniform. It's very plain, but she looks stunning. Taylor can't take his eyes off her. Charles by contrast is doing all he can not to look at her: which makes the occasional moments when their eyes do meet all the more charged.

Constance is thrilled with the day's events. She raises a glass of wine to Elisabeth.

CONSTANCE

To a famous victory.

ELISABETH

Don't say that. Louisa's too young to be defeated.

CONSTANCE

Then we shall drink to you. To Miss Laurier.

The others raise their glasses.

TAYLOR

Miss Laurier.

They drink.

CHARLES

Just don't do that to me again.

(CONTINUED)

CONSTANCE

(to Taylor)

Governess after governess has tried to control Louisa and failed. Only Miss Laurier has realised that first she must control Charles.

TAYLOR

But look at him. He's not at all grateful.

Charles gives an embarrassed smile.

CHARLES

Early days yet.

An awkward silence round the table. Constance tries to start a new line of conversation.

CONSTANCE

Mr Taylor, tell us about America.

But Taylor is focussed on Elisabeth.

TAYLOR

I understand you'll be leaving in a month. Where do you go?

ELISABETH

Another situation.

TAYLOR

Then what?

ELISABETH

I don't understand.

TAYLOR

The years go by. You're no longer required. Then what? Do you return to Switzerland?

ELISABETH

I can't see into the future.

TAYLOR

Some say the future's what you make it.

Constance tries again.

CONSTANCE

In America, certainly.

(CONTINUED)

87 CONTINUED: (2) 87

Taylor keeps his eyes on Elisabeth.

TAYLOR

In America, sure. That's what I mean.
In America.

His eyes never leave Elisabeth. Charles too is gazing at her, lovely in the candlelight.

88 INT. LOUISA'S BEDROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT 88

Louisa lies asleep. Elisabeth gazes down at her, candle in hand.

ELISABETH

Goodnight, darling.

She bends down and gives her a kiss. Whispers to her in her sleep.

ELISABETH

We've begun now.

89 INT. AMY GODWIN'S BEDROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT 89

Amy Godwin lies unmoving in her bed, in the over-heated room. Charles sits beside her, holding her frail hand, stroking it. Her eyes are on him, but they're not focussed on him. Impossible to tell if she understands him or not.

CHARLES

I've never kept any secrets from you. But now... I don't know how much you want to know.

He searches her eyes for clues. Was that a flicker? Is she telling him to go on?

CHARLES

I remember her, in the firelight. I remember too much.

90 INT. GLASSHOUSE, SELCOMBE PARK - DAY 90

CLOSE ON a knotted tendon of the great vine. FOLLOW the vine down and along, to find a woman's shoulder. UP TO FIND Elisabeth's face. She stands motionless in the milky light, looking straight ahead.

ELISABETH'S POV - Through the white-streaked glass, the glitter of the lake's surface. The water ripples and forms new shapes. Something moving. Slick water over shining skin.

(CONTINUED)

90 CONTINUED:

90

An arm flashing, a naked back. A body glimmering, distorted in the water. Moving fast, coming closer.

Charles, swimming naked in the lake.

A surge in the water, a cascade of light. He's pulling himself up, out of the water, streaming and shining, up onto the terrace.

Elisabeth watches, motionless, overwhelmed by memories of desire.

CLOSE ANGLES ON CHARLES'S BODY - Distorted by the smeared glass, but beautiful. The ripple of flank muscles as he dries himself. The towel moving down, disclosing nipples, navel, belly.

Elisabeth watching. Breathing fast.

91 INT. SCHOOLROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

91

Charles, fully dressed, with Louisa in his arms. She holds on tight, not wanting to be left. He reads the words pinned round the walls, puzzled by them.

... Never Obey Papa, Question Religion's Sacred Truths ...

Elisabeth comes in, brisk and businesslike. For the barest moment, their eyes meet, with a tiny muffled shock. Then he turns to Louisa.

CHARLES

Now, darling. You promised.

Louisa clings tighter, and starts to cry. Charles untwines her arms and puts her down.

CHARLES

Please, darling.

Louisa clings to his leg, weeping.

CHARLES

I really can't bear this.

ELISABETH

That's why she does it.

CHARLES

Damnation! Can't I feel for my own child?

(CONTINUED)

ELISABETH

Feel for her, Mr Godwin, but don't pity her. Feel proud of her. Let her show you what she can do.

CHARLES

Louisa. Darling. Please.

Abruptly, Louisa stops crying and detaches herself from his leg. She goes over to the window, and keeping her back to him, speaks to him in a sullen voice.

LOUISA

Go, then. If you want to go, go.

Charles looks at her in anguish.

CHARLES

Will you be alright, darling?

LOUISA

You don't care, so what does it matter?

Charles turns to Elisabeth. Her look is strong and steady, and keeps him on track. A brief nod of his head, and he turns and leaves the room. Elisabeth locks the door after him.

ELISABETH

Now it's just you and me. Shall we start our lessons?

Louisa turns round, her face distorted with fury.

LOUISA

You're just a servant. I don't have to do what you say. I don't -

ELISABETH

That's enough! Be silent!

The command is issued with such authority that Louisa is taken by surprise, and does as she is told.

ELISABETH

You will obey me, whether you want to or not. You will obey me because, poor as I am, I am placed in authority over you. You will not speak disrespectfully to me, or raise your voice to me.

Louisa's answer is a slow defiant jeer.

(CONTINUED)

91 CONTINUED: (2)

91

LOUISA

Ser-vant!

Seeing that Elisabeth doesn't react, her jeer gets louder and louder.

LOUISA

Ser-ervant! Ser-er-vant!

Elisabeth picks up one of the jars in which she thins her paints with water, and throws the contents SPLAT! into Louisa's face. Blue watercolour splashes over the girl's hair and dress. Louisa gasps in shock.

Elisabeth picks up another paintwater jar, the red one, and throws the contents into her own face. Louisa stares, now utterly astonished. The red stain trickles down

Elisabeth's cheeks and neck. The two of them look like savages.

Without making any attempt to wipe herself clean, Elisabeth speaks, with a bitter and passionate intensity.

ELISABETH

I'm not a servant. I'm a prisoner.
So will you be, when you grow up.
The day you come of age, the gates
will close around you, because you
are a woman. If you marry, everything
you own will become the property of
your husband. If you don't marry,
every profession will be closed to
you but one, and that one a life of
loneliness and humiliation. They
lock you up, Louisa! But there's
one door they can't lock. They can't
imprison your mind. That's why I
want you to learn to read. I want
you to have your own life.

Louisa stares at Elisabeth, mesmerised by her passion. She has no knowledge that Elisabeth speaks as a mother to her daughter, but she feels the full charge of her emotion.

92 INT. NORTH CORRIDOR, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

92

Constance stands looking out of the window into the entrance courtyard below. Something's going on that she doesn't understand, and it worries her.

93 EXT. ENTRANCE COURTYARD, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

93

CONSTANCE'S POV - Frost silvers the cobbles in the courtyard, where a one-horse gig standing waiting. Charles is seeing off a soberly-dressed middle-aged man: DANIEL DODDS, a lawyer. Dodds is observing the customary courtesies, but Charles is brusque.

CHARLES

Good day to you.

Without waiting, he turns back into the house. Dodds bows ironically at nobody.

DODDS

Good day to you, sir.

He climbs into the gig.

94 EXT. FARMYARD TRACK, SELCOMBE PARK - DAY

94

Charles walks briskly up the frosty track from the house to the farmyard, with Robert Ames, the farm manager, at his side. Charles is frowning, disturbed by the news he's just received.

CHARLES

What would we get for the water meadows?

AMES

Two hundred, maybe.

CHARLES

Dodds says we need a thousand.

AMES

You'd have to sell a whole farm for that.

CHARLES

Church Farm? Would that do it?

AMES

I hate to see good land go, sir.

CHARLES

You think I like it?

AMES

This would be Lord Clare, sir?

(CONTINUED)

94 CONTINUED:

94

CHARLES

Yes. My loving father.

They've reached the big barn.

95 INT. GREAT BARN, SELCOMBE PARK - DAY

95

A crush of squealing sheep in the big covered space. Two lines of hurdles held by FARM WORKERS are being used to funnel a ram and several sheep up a ramp into a small open wagon. Clem Duly the shepherd works his dogs to achieve the loading, while John Taylor stands by the wagon overseeing the operation. Davey, the young farm hand, controls the sheep already in the wagon.

Charles and Robert Ames come through the arched entrance to join Taylor.

TAYLOR

There you are, Charles.

Charles inspects the sheep in the wagon.

CHARLES

All behaving themselves, are they?

TAYLOR

No problems so far.

CHARLES

You'll do well with them. I guarantee it.

Davey clears his throat, and suddenly bursts into nervous speech.

DAVEY

I was thinking, sir - on that ship - they'll not be happy, sir - there should be a man go with them, sir -

CHARLES

What's this, Davey?

DAVEY

I'd be willing, sir.

CHARLES

(surprised)

You want to go with them to America?

DAVEY

That's just it, sir. America.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES

But you've never left Selcombe in your life. Your family's lived here for generations.

DAVEY

Yes, sir. That's about it, sir.

Charles turns to throw a questioning look at Ames and Taylor.

TAYLOR

I've more than enough work for good men.

AMES

He's a good man, no question of that.

CHARLES

Are you sure this is what you want, Davey?

DAVEY

Yes, sir.

CHARLES

Then you'd better go.

Davey grins with pleasure.

DAVEY

Thank you, sir.

The last of the sheep are in the wagon, and one of the other farm hands slams the tail-gate shut. The driver of the wagon sets his team in motion, and Davey and the sheep roll away out of the big barn.

CHARLES

My best ram. My best ewes. My best man. What else do you want?

TAYLOR

Just the one more.

He gives Charles a self-conscious grin.

TAYLOR

Wish me luck.

96 INT. LIBRARY, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

96

The door opens, and Elisabeth enters. John Taylor is standing by yet another Godwin portrait. He turns to greet her with a smile.

ELISABETH
You asked to see me.

TAYLOR
Yes. I want a moment alone with you
before I go.

A wave at the portrait.

TAYLOR
As alone as you can be in this house.

Elisabeth stands, waiting to be told what it is he wants. He gazes at her, his frank open face telling her most of it without words.

TAYLOR
Miss Laurier, I won't waste your
time. I'm a single man, with five
thousand acres to my name. If you
would consider a life in America, I
would be proud to take you there. As
my wife.

Elisabeth isn't altogether surprised by this. She hesitates before she replies.

ELISABETH
You pay me a very great compliment,
sir.

Again, she hesitates.

TAYLOR
But the answer's no.

ELISABETH
I'm afraid so.

TAYLOR
Well, you don't know till you ask.

ELISABETH
You're not too disappointed, I think.

(CONTINUED)

96 CONTINUED:

96

TAYLOR

I hardly know you, so I can't make out I'll not be able to live without you. But, well, a man can get his hopes up pretty high, pretty quick.

ELISABETH

I'm sorry.

TAYLOR

Just so I know - I guess I'll be doing something like this again one of these days - is it anything I can fix? Like my dress? Or how I talk?

ELISABETH

No, Mr Taylor. Any lady would be fortunate to be courted by you.

TAYLOR

Any lady but you.

His eyes ask for her reason. she doesn't give it.

ELISABETH

I'm sorry.

97 EXT. DRIVE, SELCOMBE PARK - DAY

97

John Taylor is leaving, in the two-horse carriage. Charles walks with the slowly-moving vehicle, talking to his friend through the carriage window.

CHARLES

Write and tell me when the Southdowns start winning all the prizes.

TAYLOR

Come and see for yourself.

CHARLES

Maybe I will. One day.

TAYLOR

Best grazing in the world. Twenty dollars an acre. Think about it.

CHARLES

Did you find time for that other business?

TAYLOR

She turned me down.

(CONTINUED)

97 CONTINUED:

97

CHARLES

She turned you down?

TAYLOR

I guess there's somebody else. Lucky fellow, is all I can say. Bye, Charles.

CHARLES

Bye, John.

He comes to a stop by the low wall, with its column where Louisa waited for him. Smiling, he waves as the carriage picks up speed down the drive. Then the smile fades. He turns to look thoughtfully back towards the house.

98 INT. SITTING ROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT

98

CLOSE on the fire, as Charles pokes the glowing coals to make them burn brighter. He rises, and stands lost in thought, gazing into the fire. The lamps have not been lit.

Footsteps. He doesn't look round.

Elisabeth enters, come to join the company for dinner. Finding Charles alone, she's about to turn and go, when he stops her.

CHARLES

Don't go. Constance will be down directly.

ELISABETH

As you wish.

Silence.

CHARLES

John Taylor tells me he made you an offer, and you refused him.

ELISABETH

Yes.

CHARLES

For Louisa's sake, I presume.

A very slight hesitation.

ELISABETH

Yes.

(CONTINUED)

98 CONTINUED:

98

CHARLES

Even though you're under a month's notice to leave.

ELISABETH

Yes.

Silence.

CHARLES

The fire gives more light than one expects, doesn't it?

They both remember when he last used these words.

ELISABETH

Yes.

A long moment, in which neither of them moves or speaks. A silence which tells much.

Constance enters.

CONSTANCE

What, no lamps lit? What's Jane thinking of?

99 INT. SCHOOLROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT

99

CLOSE on a lamp as it is lit, and the wick flutters into bright golden flame. Elisabeth replaces the glass on the lamp, and sits down at the table to work by its light.

A knock on the door. She looks up, colour rising in her cheeks. Who else could be knocking so late at night?

ELISABETH

Yes?

The door opens. Constance.

CONSTANCE

I saw the light under the door. Do you mind?

ELISABETH

No. Of course not.

Constance comes in, and sees the line of words pinned along the wall.

(CONTINUED)

CONSTANCE

"A bonny child does everything for God. Headstrong ignorant juveniles keep low manners" - Does any of this make any impression whatsoever on Louisa?

ELISABETH

It's an ABC. The first letters of each word form the alphabet.

Constance looks more closely.

CONSTANCE

So they do! "Never obey papa, question religion's sacred truths" - how clever - "until virtue, withering, expires. Yea, Zion!"

She laughs with delight. Elisabeth smiles.

CONSTANCE

Where did you find it?

ELISABETH

I made it up.

CONSTANCE

You made it up? And you're not even English! That's very clever.

She looks over the illustrated word strips. Speaks without looking at Elisabeth.

CONSTANCE

Charles seems to be more friendly to you these days.

ELISABETH

Mr Godwin has always been very polite.

CONSTANCE

But he hardly has a word to say to you, has he? He's been like that from the day you came. Do you know why?

ELISABETH

No.

CONSTANCE

Have you thought that it might be because he finds you very attractive?

(CONTINUED)

She looks up at Elisabeth as she says this, to catch her response. Elisabeth hardly knows what to say.

CONSTANCE

Please don't misunderstand me. I don't think he's even aware of it himself. But I've seen the way he looks at you.

ELISABETH

Then you've seen more than I have.

CONSTANCE

Oh, it's all quite harmless. I know him well, you see. He would never do anything to hurt Amy. But I thought it right to speak to you.

ELISABETH

Yes. Thank you.

Constance moves towards the door, as if she has said what she came to say. But then she stops, and turns back.

CONSTANCE

It can get lonely in these long winter evenings. Do come and sit with me, whenever you wish.

ELISABETH

Thank you, but I'm used to being alone. I would hardly know what to do with myself in company.

CONSTANCE

For my sake, then. I would like us to be friends.

ELISABETH

Our circumstances are so very different.

CONSTANCE

Are they? I'm a lady of a certain age, unmarried, living in a large house, far from fashionable society. In need of company.

ELISABETH

I live the life I must. You live the life you choose.

(CONTINUED)

99 CONTINUED: (3)

99

CONSTANCE

Don't you sometimes wonder why I choose it? To be mistress of a house, but not of its master?

ELISABETH

Yes. I have asked myself that.

CONSTANCE

And what do you answer?

Elisabeth chooses her words carefully.

ELISABETH

That you have a high esteem for Mr Godwin.

CONSTANCE

A high esteem... Yes... Mr Godwin and I are exactly of an age. As children we played together. There was once some talk that we might marry. But when Charles called on my father, it was for Amy, not for me.

(Beat)

Yes, you could call it a high esteem.

ELISABETH

Is there any hope that Mrs Godwin might recover?

CONSTANCE

None. You know, I believe Amy was the only person in the world who ever truly loved me. We told each other everything. I feel quite alone without her.

ELISABETH

I'm very sorry.

CONSTANCE

So you see, I'd like us to be friends.

With a smile, she leaves the room.

100 INT. AMY GODWIN'S ROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT

100

Charles sits by his wife's bed, holding her hand in his. Her expressionless eyes seem to see him.

(CONTINUED)

100 CONTINUED:

100

CHARLES

What am I to do, Amy? What am I to do?

Her eyes gaze back, revealing nothing.

101 INT. EAST CORRIDOR, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT

101

The door to Amy Godwin's room opens, and Charles comes out. He stands still for a moment, collecting his thoughts. Then he looks up. At the far end of the dark corridor, in the light falling from the stairwell lamp, Elisabeth stands watching him. The shared look lasts just a moment. Then she goes on her way to her own room.

102 INT. SCHOOLROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

102

Louisa sits across the table from Elisabeth, 'reading' the word-strips as Elisabeth lays them before her. Her tone and demeanour makes clear that she's here under protest, and finds the whole business pointless.

LOUISA

"Tree". "Bee". "Eye."

The illustration is of an eye, but the word is see.

ELISABETH

"See."

More word-strips.

LOUISA

"Pig." "Dig." "Wig." This is stupid.

Elisabeth lays down more word-strips: this time a series of adjectives illustrated by comically expressive faces. Louisa stares at them, baffled.

ELISABETH

"Bad."

Louisa gets it. A glum face in the illustration.

LOUISA

"Sad"?

ELISABETH

Yes.

Another one, a smiley face.

(CONTINUED)

102 CONTINUED:

102

LOUISA

"Happy"? I suppose it's "glad".

ELISABETH

Yes.

The last one isn't so obvious. Then Louisa sees it.

LOUISA

"Mad"?

ELISABETH

Yes.

Louisa smiles, pleased with herself.

103 INT. SCHOOLROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DUSK

103

Later. The room lit only by firelight. Elisabeth kneels before the fire, adding new coals. Louisa sits nearby on the floor, hugging her knees, looking into the glowing heart of the fire. Elisabeth lays down the coal-tongs, and sits back on the floor, echoing Louisa's posture. A brief silence. The beginning of intimacy.

ELISABETH

When I was young, I had no mother.
She died just after I was born.

Louisa looks into the fire and says nothing.

ELISABETH

I loved my father very much. But
what I wanted most in the world was
a mother.

A flicker of response on Louisa's face. Then:

LOUISA

The sick lady's not my real mother.

ELISABETH

Yes. I know.

LOUISA

My real mother's not sick.

She says nothing more. Elisabeth is too curious to leave it there.

ELISABETH

Where is she?

(CONTINUED)

105 CONTINUED:

105

CHARLES
Can I have dinner first, please?

She releases his hand.

LOUISA
What's her name?

CHARLES
Whose name?

He stoops to blow out the lamp.

LOUISA
Miss Laurier.

He blows out the lamp. Darkness and firelight.

CHARLES
I don't know.

106 INT. SITTING ROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT

106

Constance has pencil and paper, and is engaged in what is evidently a word game. Elisabeth sits beside her on the sofa, playing her part.

CONSTANCE
"Alas, beautiful creature!" - A, B,
C. You have D. What's your D?

ELISABETH
"Dreadful."

CONSTANCE
"Dreadful"? Heavens! "Alas, beautiful
creature, dreadful" - So I have E.

Charles enters. A glance at the two of them, and he goes to stand before the fire.

CONSTANCE
"Emptiness".

ELISABETH
"Follows."

CONSTANCE
"Dreadful emptiness follows"?
Charles, we're playing an alphabet
game. What does dreadful emptiness
follow, that begins with a G?

(CONTINUED)

106 CONTINUED:

106

Charles looks into the fire. Thinks.

CHARLES

"Great hopes."

CONSTANCE

Great Hopes. Very good, Charles.
That's G and H together. "Alas,
beautiful creature, dreadful emptiness
follows great hopes." Heavens, what
can have happened to this unfortunate
lady?

Charles looks up and catches Elisabeth's eyes, unseen by Constance. He makes a face that is half-apologetic, half-amused.

107 INT. LOUISA'S BEDROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT

107

Elisabeth stoops to kiss Louisa, asleep in bed.

108 INT. NURSERY CORRIDOR, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT

108

Elisabeth comes out of Louisa's room into the corridor, lit candle in hand, and goes to the door of her own room. Ahead, at the end of the corridor, she sees a shadow move on the wall. Someone is in the schoolroom.

She goes on down the corridor, round the corner to the open schoolroom door. There, in the firelight, is Charles.

109 INT. SCHOOLROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT

109

Elisabeth enters, still holding her candle. Charles looks round. He acts as if his presence here, at this late hour, requires no explanation. He indicates the words pinned round the walls.

CHARLES

So this is one of your alphabets?

ELISABETH

Yes.

He points to the word-strips on the table.

CHARLES

Your own work too?

ELISABETH

Yes.

(CONTINUED)

109 CONTINUED:

109

He picks up the word strips bearing his name, papa, and hers, Miss Laurier, and studies the little illustrations.

CHARLES

How do you know she doesn't read the pictures, rather than the words?

ELISABETH

She does.

CHARLES

So it's not really reading.

ELISABETH

No. It's just pretending. But after a while, the pretence becomes a reality.

CHARLES

I see.

He lays down the two names, side by side. Papa. Miss Laurier.

They too are standing side by side before the table, on which Elisabeth has put the candle. Silence falls, and they both become aware how close they are. They stand very still, neither speaking.

CHARLES

Louisa tells me you have some story about firelight.

ELISABETH

Yes. I tell her firelight is a magic time, when time stands still.

CHARLES

Why do you tell her that?

ELISABETH

I find it helps. A time with no rules, at the end of the day.

They don't move. The silence between them becomes unbearably intimate.

CHARLES

I must ask you to help me.

ELISABETH

How?

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES

There was a time, a short time, when
we were close, you and I.

ELISABETH

Yes.

CHARLES

Do you remember it?

ELISABETH

Yes.

CHARLES

I remember it. All of it.

(Beat)

Just tell me that time is over, and
can't come again.

Silence. A silence that gives him hope. She looks up, meets
his eyes.

CHARLES

You don't answer.

ELISABETH

(very low)

What is there to say?

CHARLES

Tell me what happens when time stands
still.

ELISABETH

(very low)

In the firelight, you can do what
you want. Say what you want. Be what
you want. When the lamps are lit
again, time starts again, and
everything you said or did is
forgotten. More than forgotten. It
never happened.

Moving slowly, as if in a dream, Charles picks up the
candleholder, and keeping his eyes on Elisabeth, softly blows
out the flame. He gazes at her through the rising curl of
smoke. Puts down the candle.

Then his hand comes up to touch her cheek: the lightest of
touches. She doesn't move. His fingers stroke her brow, her
eyes, her lips. She doesn't move.

(CONTINUED)

109 CONTINUED: (3)

109

Charles takes her hand in his, and kisses it. He smiles for her as he does so, his eyes saying, How small a touch this is, for so much longing. Understanding, she smiles back, takes his hand to her lips, kisses it in her turn. He comes close now, and kisses her cheek: still the gentle, almost respectful touch, but charged with the intensity of what it will become. She stays still, moving her face a little under his kiss, wanting to feel every moment of it. He kisses her other cheek, and this time, as he does so, she begins to kiss him, searching his face with her lips. When at last their lips meet in a true kiss, it's light, as if they hardly dare to release the waiting passion.

ELISABETH

Not here.

110 INT. CHARLES'S BEDROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT

110

THE FIRE, burning strong red: soft hisses and crackles in the dull glow of the coals.

CHARLES'S POV - Elisabeth's face, cheek rim-lit by the fire. She's lying on the bed, gazing at Charles, her eyes telling him how much she wants him. His hand reaches out to stroke her cheek. Then she takes his hand in hers, and moves it softly down the line of her neck and shoulder, following the rim of firelight along her naked body, to her breast.

111 INT. GLASSHOUSE, SELCOMBE PARK - DAY

111

Elisabeth moving slowly through the milky light of this dream-like space: on her face, a faraway look. She could almost be sleep-walking.

She comes to the glazed doors that open onto the lake.

112 EXT. LAKE, SELCOMBE PARK - DAY

112

A thin snow is falling, here and there dusting the ground with white. Elisabeth comes out of the glasshouse and walks on, to the edge of the terrace. She stands here, looking across the water at the lake house.

The sound of carriages coming down the distant drive. She turns to look.

113 EXT. DRIVE, SELCOMBE PARK - DAY

113

Thin snow falling, veiling the entrance front of the big house. The sound of horses very close now. Two four-horse CARRIAGES burst INTO FRAME, so close TO CAMERA that little can be made out but shape and movement.

114 INT. GREAT HALL, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

114

William opens the entrance doors to reveal scurries of snow, and the carriages pulling up in the courtyard outside. TWO SERVANTS riding on the back of the lead carriage jump down to open the carriage doors and place the steps. Constance appears in the doorway to greet the visitors. Out climbs Lord Clare, followed by Molly Holland. The carriage behind disgorges five MUSICIANS carrying instrument boxes.

Lord Clare is in a foul mood.

CLARE

God, I hate the country! It's always
so damned cold!

He stamps his feet on the ground to get warm. Constance looks with surprise at the entourage.

CLARE

Come on, Molly. Into the mausoleum.

He takes her arm and leads her through the doors, giving Constance a token peck as he enters.

CLARE

Hallo, Connie. Terrible journey.
Roads get worse every year.

CONSTANCE

Who are all these people, Jimmy?
Hallo, Molly.

CLARE

Fiddlers.

He stops, staring at the blank space on the wall.

CLARE

What happened to the Van Dyck?

CONSTANCE

Charles sold it. You know that very
well. Jimmy -

CLARE

Dreary picture, anyway. You! More
coal on the fire, before I freeze to
death.

This is addressed to William. Then, to the musicians:

(CONTINUED)

CLARE
Come on in, Manzini. Herd your fellows
in.

CONSTANCE
Jimmy -

CLARE
Can't have a dance without music,
Connie. Everyone knows that.

CONSTANCE
What dance?

CLARE
(to William)
Fire!

WILLIAM
Can't bend, my lord. Wig falls off.

Clare shoots him a sharp look. Before he can respond, Charles
appears, trailed by Louisa.

CHARLES
Father.

CLARE
Yes, yes. Here I am.
(to Louisa)
Hallo there, little missy.

CHARLES
Who are all these people?

CLARE
Christmas cheer.

MOLLY
Hallo, Charles.

CHARLES
Molly.

CLARE
What is it about this house? The
moment I walk in, I want to kill
myself.

115 INT. SOUTH STAIRS, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT 115

Elisabeth appears at the head of the stairs, on her way down for dinner. From the ballroom below come the sounds of violins being tuned. As she sets off down the stairs, she hears raised voices coming from the sitting room.

CLARE (O.S.)

Damn it, boy! Don't preach at me!

116 INT. SITTING ROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT 116

Charles and Lord Clare, both dressed for dinner, stand with drinks in their hands, in the middle of a heated exchange.

CHARLES

You realise I have to sell one of the farms.

CLARE

Never sell land, Charles. The one sensible thing my father ever said to me. Why borrow money if all you mean to do is give it back? Where's Molly? She can't still be dressing.

117 INT. SOUTH STAIRS, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT 117

Elisabeth reaches the bottom of the stairs and approaches the sitting room door. She can see both men: but they don't yet see her.

CHARLES

Are there any more charges on the estate?

CLARE

How do I know? I'm not a bank clerk. I just - live my life.

CHARLES

(bitterly)

All for the sake of a few short years of passing pleasures.

118 INT. SITTING ROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT 118

Elisabeth enters the room.

CLARE

Passing pleasures are all we have, boy. All we have between us and the grave.

(CONTINUED)

118 CONTINUED:

118

He sees Elisabeth, and registers surprise.

CLARE

Hallo! Who are you?

Charles turns.

CHARLES

Miss Laurier. My daughter's governess.
My father, Lord Clare.

Elisabeth curtseys. Lord Clare stares at her in open admiration.

CLARE

Never had governesses like you in my day. What are you, French?

CHARLES

She's from Switzerland.

Clare turns back to Charles to complete his argument.

CLARE

Sacrifice your life if you want. I mean to enjoy mine.
(to Elisabeth)
Miss Laurier, is it? D'you polka?

119 INT. BALLROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT

119

Lord Clare sweeps INTO FRAME, dancing with Elisabeth. The musicians play with vigour, the great room alive with couples dancing the polka. Elisabeth has never attempted the polka before, but Clare gives a good strong lead, and she's picking it up fast. And loving it.

About two dozen couples are dancing, fairly chaotically, as this is a new dance. As many again stand at either end and along the sides, drinking and gossiping. The GENTRY OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD have responded to Lord Clare's invitation, and a very mixed bunch they are, mixing styles from the last fifty years: a far cry from the fashionable crowd at the London dance.

Constance is acting the hostess, moving from group to group exchanging civilities. But time and again, her eyes stray to Charles. He stands on the edge of the dance floor, watching Elisabeth.

Molly Holland, looking stunning, joins him, and notes the direction of his gaze. She speaks in a conspiratorial undertone.

(CONTINUED)

MOLLY

Well done, Charles. She's lovely.

CHARLES

What?

MOLLY

Your Swiss governess.

CHARLES

Oh, Miss Laurier. Yes. An excellent teacher.

MOLLY

(amused)

I'm glad to hear it.

Charles is all too aware of Molly's innuendo. Seeing Constance pass close by, he reaches out for her.

CHARLES

Connie!

CONSTANCE

Yes, Charles?

CHARLES

What do you say to a turn round the room?

Constance flushes with pleasure.

CONSTANCE

Why not?

They take the floor, and spin away in the chain of couples. A few false steps, but they keep up. Constance is in heaven.

CONSTANCE

I never thought I'd get you onto a dance floor, Charles.

CHARLES

There's a first time for everything.

Clare and Elisabeth come spinning past Molly Holland. Deftly, at just the right moment, Molly sticks out one foot, and Clare goes flying. She hurries to help him up.

MOLLY

My poor lambkin! Are you alright?

(CONTINUED)

119 CONTINUED: (2)

119

CLARE

Of course I'm alright!

ELISABETH

I'm so sorry. Was that me?

MOLLY

I'll see to him, Miss Laurier. Please don't trouble yourself.

CLARE

I tell you I'm alright! I want to dance, damn it!

MOLLY

Why didn't you say?

She sweeps him off into the dance. Elisabeth watches them go with a smile. As they dance, Molly speaks close into Clare's ear, and his expression shows first disbelief, then delight. She's telling him her suspicions about Charles and the governess.

Elisabeth is watching Charles and Constance spinning along, Constance glowing and laughing in Charles's arms, suddenly ten years younger. Elisabeth's face becomes more thoughtful.

120 INT. NORTH CORRIDOR, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT

120

Louisa is sitting on the top step of the North Stairs, in her nightdress, in darkness. Elisabeth comes up the stairs towards her, leaving the jaunty music of the ballroom behind. As she gets closer, Louisa rises and slips silently away, unseen, into her own room.

Elisabeth goes on down the nursery corridor, pauses for a moment outside Louisa's door, which is ajar, and goes on into her own room.

121 INT. ELISABETH'S ROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT

121

Elisabeth lights the lamp and heaps more coals on the dying fire. She sits down in the chair before the fire. She's over-excited by the dance, and needs to calm down before she goes to bed.

122 INT. LOUISA'S BEDROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT

122

Louisa lies in bed in the darkness, wide awake. She hears the distant music of the dance. Then footsteps coming down the nursery corridor, past her door.

123 INT. ELISABETH'S ROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT

123

Elisabeth looks up as the door opens softly. It's Charles. He comes in, closes the door behind him.

CHARLES

I wanted to ask you to dance.

For a long moment, Elisabeth looks at him. The strains of the dance music come to them from the distant ballroom. Then, slowly, she rises and comes to him. She stands before him, and they look at each other, eyes so full of love. He takes her in his arms. And slowly, to the sound of the distant music, they dance: round and round in the confined space.

Then, as slowly, their dance comes to a stop, and they stand motionless in the firelight, eyes locked. Charles's fingers feel for the buttons of her dress, at her throat. She doesn't move as he undoes the buttons, and opens her dress, and caresses her neck and shoulders. Then his gentle fingers unlace the chemise beneath, and open it, and his hands move over her breasts, naked in the firelight. She goes on looking and looking into his eyes, wanting the sensations, not wanting to think.

124 EXT. DEW-POND ON THE DOWNS - DAWN

124

An iron-hard frost now grips the land. Clem Duly, the shepherd, breaks the ice on the dew-pond with his crook, and forms a water-hole for his flock to drink. The sheep crowd round the hole. Clem watches in the dawn light, his breath smoking.

125 EXT. SELCOMBE PARK - DAWN

125

Frost over the park. Ice in the wheel-ruts. The tracery of trees touched with silver.

Over this is heard the notes of a piano playing the introduction to the old Christmas carol, "Winter Born". Then a clear and lovely voice begins to sing.

ELLEN

(singing V.O.)

Winter born are little lambs O, the
snow lies deep Shepherd, fold them
while you may For lambs do stray
away, afar And you will weep And you
will weep When the snow lies deep...

126 INT. GREAT HALL, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

126

A fire burns in the fireplace, but it's very cold in the Great Hall, and breath hangs in the air. The GENTRY are gathered at one end of the room, the HOUSE SERVANTS and ESTATE WORKERS at the other. Lord Clare has a hangover, and is drinking to cure it. Molly Holland is by his side. Charles with Louisa. Elisabeth behind. Constance sits at the piano and plays accompaniment. And the singer with the celestial voice is none other than stupid lumpish Ellen, the schoolroom maid.

ELLEN

(singing)

Winter born was Mary's babe O, the
snow lies deep Mary, kiss him while
you may For Jesu will away, afar And
you will weep And you will weep When
the snow lies deep...

As she sings, we see the faces of the onlookers, all touched by the beauty of the song with its repeated refrain, that the child we love will be lost to us. Charles holds Louisa in his arms, and strokes her hair. Elisabeth's eyes are also on Louisa, her own child. And Lord Clare's eyes are on Charles, his own son.

For the third verse, the villagers and some of the gentry join in, their voices underscoring Ellen's strong lead.

ELLEN/GROUP

(singing)

Winter born all little babes O, the
snow lies deep Mothers, love them
while you may For they shall stray
away, afar And you will weep And you
will weep When the snow lies deep...

The song ends. Constance plays out the accompaniment. There's a moment of silence, then Charles leads the applause. Lord Clare hauls himself up to do his duty.

CLARE

Give them all drinks! Drinks,
everyone! Good singing, girl.

Glasses are filled from a great punchbowl, and handed round. Lord Clare raises his glass, wobbling a little.

CLARE

Well, here I am again. You only see
me once a year. Once too many for
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

126 CONTINUED:

126

CLARE (CONT'D)

most of you, eh? It's certainly
once too many for me. Never fear,
I'll be gone in the morning, back to
civilisation, and you can all get on
with your blameless bucolic lives.

He totters, and recovers himself. A suppressed laugh runs
through the crowd.

CLARE

Yes, yes, yes. But I'll tell you one
good thing about being drunk. You
don't feel the damn cold. Merry
Christmas to you all, and so on, and
so forth. Hurrah!

He drains his glass. Far from displeasing the staff and
workers, he delights them. A big answering cheer goes up.
They raise their glasses and drink and chuckle with pleasure.

Clare mutters to Molly.

CLARE

Get me out of here before I fall
over.

127 INT. LIBRARY, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

127

The shutters have been shut across the windows, letting only
narrow slits of daylight into the room. Lord Clare lies
sprawled, fully dressed, across a sofa, his eyes closed,
breathing loudly and evenly.

Elisabeth enters. Seeing him asleep, she goes to a chair
facing the sofa and sits down, and waits for him to wake.

After a few moments he speaks, without opening his eyes.

CLARE

Well? Are you just going to sit there
like a dummy?

ELISABETH

You sent for me, sir.

CLARE

Did I? Oh, yes. Are you or aren't
you?

ELISABETH

Am I what?

(CONTINUED)

CLARE
Diddling Charles.

Elisabeth is too surprised to answer. Clare gives himself a shake and opens his eyes to peer at her through the gloom.

CLARE
Molly says you are. She can usually spot these things.

ELISABETH
You judge everyone by yourself, sir.

CLARE
At least you understand what I'm talking about. Not going to swoon or anything, are you?

ELISABETH
No.

CLARE
You're wrong, missy. I don't judge everyone by myself, least of all Charles. I know he's not like me, because he's like my father. The old bastard never thought much of me. Duty this, duty that. And now Charles. Hard to have your own son acting like your father, you know.

ELISABETH
He must have been a child once.

CLARE
Of course he was a child once.

The point sinks in.

CLARE
Yes. You're right there. When he was a little fellow... Yes. I'd forgotten that.

He stands up, rubs his brow. Still hung over.

CLARE
Can't take Christmas. Can't take the Holy bloody Family.

He goes to one of the windows and pulls back the shutters. Blinks at the light. Turns to face Elisabeth, silhouetted by the bright light.

(CONTINUED)

127 CONTINUED: (2)

127

CLARE

When Charles was sixteen years old,
he stood up before me and said,
"Father, I can't respect a man who
lives only for his own pleasure."
You know what I replied?

ELISABETH

What?

CLARE

"My boy, you've no right to speak to
your father like that till you've
got yourself well and truly fucked."

Silence. Clare is well aware he's overstepped all bounds of
decency.

ELISABETH

Well, now he has.

Clare bursts into a roar of laughter.

CLARE

Good for you, missy! Good for you.

He rocks with laughter. Then, as his laughter subsides, he
looks at her, still smiling, but more ruefully now.

CLARE

You're right, of course. He's my
boy. He's my boy.

128 INT. NURSERY CORRIDOR, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

128

Louisa stands in the corridor beside the door to Elisabeth's
room, her back against the wall, listening. Distant footsteps
pass. She reaches out a hand, turns the door handle. Opens
the door. Waits. Nothing. She goes in.

129 INT. ELISABETH'S ROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

129

Louisa looks round the room with silent curiosity. She touches
the furniture as she passes: the bed, the table, the chest
of drawers. Opens a drawer, touches the garments folded
inside. Almost as if she wants to make contact with some
unseen power in the room.

Then her eyes fall on the blue sketchbook which lies on the
table. She picks it up, and opens it.

Painted ivy. Words she doesn't understand.

(CONTINUED)

129 CONTINUED:

129

For my English daughter.

She turns the pretty pages, intrigued.

Happy Christmas, little one. Wherever you are.

130 EXT. FARMYARD, SELCOMBE PARK - DAY

130

The frost-white Downs slope down to the farm. Here, where the grazing land abuts the farmyard, Clem Duly is building a lambing yard. It's a compound fenced with hurdles, two hurdles high, along two sides of which thrashed-out oat ricks have been piled to form a windbreak. Within the compound, Clem is in the process of making small rooms out of hurdles secured to stout ash uprights, roofed with hurdles thatched with wheat straw. These will be the lambing pens. The sheep, still out on the grassy slope, cluster curiously round the outside of the compound.

Charles moves among the sheep, feeling their bellies, checking them to see which ones are in lamb.

Down the track from the big house come Lord Clare and Molly Holland, both swathed in enormous fur coats against the cold, walking arm in arm. They come to a stop by the farmyard fence, and watch the busy scene.

CLARE

Sheep. I'll never understand.

Charles looks up. None too pleased to see his father.

CHARLES

Father.

MOLLY

What are the little rooms for?

CHARLES

Lambing pens.

CLARE

We'll be off, then, Charles.

CHARLES

Right.

He doesn't stop his work among the sheep. Lord Clare lingers, hoping for a moment of contact with his son before he goes.

CLARE

About this selling farms business.
There must be another way, you know.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES

Such as?

CLARE

How do I know? Talk to Dodds. That's what lawyers are for.

CHARLES

I've talked to Dodds. Do you have any other suggestions?

CLARE

(nettled)

No, no. Do as you please.

CHARLES

I haven't been able to do as I please for a long time now, father. Unlike you.

CLARE

Somebody must. Can't have everybody miserable.

Charles straightens up and looks at his father in silence. Too angry and embittered for words. Molly Holland sees a storm brewing.

MOLLY

Come along, Jimmy. The carriage will be waiting.

Lord Clare doesn't even hear her.

CLARE

Damn it, Charles! Don't look at me like that.

CHARLES

What do you want from me, father?

CLARE

Nothing. You're my son. I want - I want - Damn it, what do you expect me to want?

CHARLES

Passing pleasures, wasn't it?

CLARE

(infuriated)

Go to the devil, then!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

130 CONTINUED: (2)

130

CLARE (CONT'D)

Why should I care? You're a grown man. Live your own damned life!

He takes Molly's arm, and turns angrily away.

131 EXT. FRONT DOOR, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

131

Lord Clare and William the doorman stand side by side in the open doors to the courtyard. Outside, a carriage is pulling up, and Constance is saying goodbye to Molly Holland.

The two ageing men in the doorway stand with much the same posture, a little stooped. When a sharp icy gust passes, they both grimace in the same way. This is not lost on Lord Clare.

CLARE

How old are you, William?

WILLIAM

Sixty-three, my lord.

Lord Clare gives a grunt. Very close to his own age.

CLARE

Bones ache in the winter?

WILLIAM

Yes, my lord.

Lord Clare grunts again. So do his.

CLARE

This wig business. All bosh, isn't it?

WILLIAM

Yes, my lord.

Molly Holland has got into the carriage, and now calls to Lord Clare.

MOLLY

Come along, Jimmy.

Lord Clare gives William a tip. Expels a long sigh. And makes his way down the steps to the carriage. William manages a surreptitious glance at the coin in his hand. A sovereign. A broad smile spreads across his features. The carriage rolls away.

132 INT. SCHOOLROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

132

Louisa sits at the schoolroom table, arranging word-strips into a column of her own devising. She's making an alphabet, using the first letters of words on the strips, as checked against the alphabet words pinned round the walls.

Ant Bee Cat Duck Eat Elisabeth sits across the table, making new word-strips, and pretending to pay no attention to what Louisa is doing. Louisa searches for a word beginning with F, and finds Fire.

 LOUISA
 (low, to herself)
Fire.

Elisabeth has just completed writing the word Hat, but she hasn't yet drawn an illustration to go with it. Louisa checks the wall strip, and looks for a word beginning with G. She finds God, with a little picture of a bearded patriarch in a cloud.

 LOUISA
 (low, to herself)
God.

Elisabeth eases her new word, Hat, into the heap before Louisa. Louisa checks the wall for the next letter, and looks round for a word beginning with H. She finds Hat.

 LOUISA
 (low, to herself)
Hat.

 ELISABETH
What's that word?

 LOUISA
Hat.

 ELISABETH
How do you know?

 LOUISA
Because of the picture.

She stops, staring at the word. No picture. She looks up at Elisabeth.

 LOUISA
How do I know?

133 INT. GLASSHOUSE, SELCOMBE PARK - DAY

133

CLOSE on Elisabeth, sitting in the milky light of the abandoned glasshouse. Looking out through the blurry glass at the lake.

ELISABETH'S POV - Through the glass: the distant lake house. The small figure of Louisa moving there.

Charles is standing behind Elisabeth: also looking out at the lake house.

ELISABETH

She pretends she has a mother there.

CHARLES

I know.

He gazes at the distant child.

CHARLES

We're all pretending.

ELISABETH

What else can we do?

Charles puts one hand on her shoulder. Lightly strokes her neck, her cheek. Still awed by her beauty.

CHARLES

I try not to think about you. I try not to look at you. When you come into a room, I pretend I haven't noticed you. Then I look, and there's nothing in the world but you.

(Beat)

Sometimes I think, why don't we go away? Far away. You, me, Louisa.

ELISABETH

Leave Selcombe?

CHARLES

Yes.

ELISABETH

And all respectable society?

CHARLES

Would you come with me?

Elisabeth doesn't answer for a moment. Then:

(CONTINUED)

133 CONTINUED:

133

ELISABETH

Why ask? It's only pretending. You can't leave.

CHARLES

I don't think I can bear it.

ELISABETH

You have a duty to your estate. To your family.

(Beat)

To your wife.

CHARLES

How can you stay so calm?

She holds up a hand, and he puts his hand in hers. She presses his hand to her breast, where he can feel her beating heart.

ELISABETH

Not calm.

He strokes her breast.

CHARLES

Stay with me tonight. All night.

134 EXT. SELCOMBE PARK - NIGHT

134

Heavy snow falls over house and park.

135 INT. LOUISA'S BEDROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAWN

135

Louisa stands at her bedroom window. Outside, the predawn sky is just beginning to lighten, throwing an eery light over the snow-covered park. She gazes at the magical scene in wonder.

136 INT. NURSERY CORRIDOR/NORTH CORRIDOR, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAWN

136

Still in her nightdress, Louisa comes out into the corridor and pads past the stairs towards her father's bedroom. She shivers. This early in the morning, it's very cold.

She pushes open the door to Charles's bedroom.

LOUISA

Papa! There's snow!

137 INT. CHARLES'S BEDROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAWN

137

Louisa silent in the doorway, staring. Charles lies asleep in bed, with Elisabeth beside him. Their faces are almost

(CONTINUED)

137 CONTINUED: 137

touching. One of Elisabeth's arms is reached up to hold Charles close to her.

Louisa backs out, letting the door swing shut. The sound wakes Elisabeth, but not Charles. She looks round, sees nothing. Then she hears light footsteps running down stairs.

138 INT. CORRIDOR TO GLASSHOUSE, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAWN 138

Elisabeth appears at the far end of the corridor, in her nightdress, barefoot, just in time to see the door to the glasshouse swing shut.

ELISABETH

Louisa!

She runs to the glasshouse door.

139 EXT. GLASSHOUSE, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAWN 139

Elisabeth enters the glasshouse just as Louisa, at the far end, is opening the double doors.

ELISABETH

Louisa!

But she's gone, out onto the terrace, into the snow. Elisabeth follows fast, down the eery glimmering tunnel.

Through the open doors she sees Louisa stop at the lake's edge, surprised by something. Then, arms wide for balance, she steps out, seemingly onto the waters of the lake itself.

ELISABETH

Louisa!

140 EXT. LAKE, SELCOMBE PARK - DAWN 140

Elisabeth runs out onto the snow-covered terrace. The lake is frozen. Louisa is walking over the ice, towards the lake house.

ELISABETH

Louisa!

Louisa turns, sees Elisabeth, turns back, and walks on. Elisabeth calls again, her voice sharp with anxiety.

ELISABETH

Come back! It's not safe! It's new ice! It won't hold you!

Louisa keeps walking over the ice, not looking back.

(CONTINUED)

140 CONTINUED:

140

ELISABETH

Louisa! Please! Come back!

UNDER WATER - The shadow of Louisa's feet as they pass over the ice.

ELISABETH

Don't leave me!

Louisa stops: turns. Looks back at Elisabeth.

UNDER WATER - The ice gives a soft groan, and starts to crack.

Louisa feels it move beneath her, and all at once, she's extremely frightened. Her eyes reach out to Elisabeth. Then there comes a SNAP, and she begins to sink.

UNDER WATER - Louisa's feet and legs sinking through the ice.

Elisabeth hurls herself onto the ice, smashing her way through the freezing water.

UNDER WATER - Louisa's terrified face, slipping PAST CAMERA, staring as she sinks -

Elisabeth, smashing through the ice towards her, deeper and deeper, literally breaking a path -

UNDER WATER - Louisa struggling, thrashing - Elisabeth looming behind her - Sinking down, her face now visible under water beside Louisa - Her arms grasping her, holding her tight - Rising up -

Elisabeth and Louisa burst out of the water, gasping for air -

The child's arms tight round Elisabeth's neck, clinging to her with all her might, sobbing with terror. Elisabeth turns and wades back, the icy water streaming off their shivering bodies. Frantic with relief, Elisabeth kisses Louisa's head and face and neck.

141 INT. LOUISA'S ROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAWN

141

The fire burns low. Louisa lies in bed, deep under blankets for warmth, apparently asleep. Elisabeth sits on the chair by the bed, watching her.

Elisabeth turns to check the fire. Seeing how low it's burning, she rises to add more coals. As she kneels before the fire, Louisa's eyes open. Without moving or making a sound, she watches her. Then as Elisabeth stands up again, she closes her eyes, and goes back to pretending to be asleep.

(CONTINUED)

- 141 CONTINUED: 141
- Back by the bedside, Elisabeth lays a light hand on Louisa's cheek, to reassure herself that the child is warm enough. Believing her to be asleep, she speaks softly.
- ELISABETH
- Sleep, darling. Sleep. I'll never
leave you. Never.
- 142 EXT. SELCOMBE PARK - DAY 142
- The snow-covered park, with the great house in the distance, and the long ridge of Selcombe Beacon beyond.
- VERY CLOSE TO CAMERA - A long carriage rumbles THROUGH FRAME, heading up the drive to the house.
- 143 INT. LONG CARRIAGE - DAY 143
- Four BANKER'S MEN in black coats sit silently shoulder to shoulder, swaying with the movement of the carriage. The CAMERA MOVES towards the front of the carriage to discover a second identical row: four more silent black-coated men. AND MOVES AGAIN to find a third row: four more men. In this front row of the carriage, one familiar face: Daniel Dodds, the lawyer.
- 144 EXT. ENTRANCE COURTYARD, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 144
- HIGH ANGLE - Looking down on the snow-covered courtyard, as the long hearse-like carriage draws up to the front door. The banker's men file out, to line up on either side of the carriage. Daniel Dodds climbs the steps, and with ominous authority, knocks three times on the door.
- 145 INT. NORTH HALL, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 145
- Elisabeth comes down the stairs. She passes two banker's men, listing the furniture in the hall. They bow respectfully as she goes by.
- 146 INT. GREAT HALL, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 146
- Daniel Dodds sits enthroned at a long table, placed so that he can warm his back at the now-blazing fire. On the table lie unrolled plans of Selcombe Place, and several ledgers. He looks up as Elisabeth passes, and he too gives her a polite bow of the head.
- 147 INT. DINING ROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY 147
- Constance sits at the breakfast table, barely touching her food, tense with anxiety. Elisabeth enters.

(CONTINUED)

147 CONTINUED:

147

CONSTANCE

They're making an inventory. Charles left for town at first light. Mr Dodds tells me the estate is to be sold.

She drops a fork: a sharp clink in the silence. She gives Elisabeth a curious little smile.

CONSTANCE

I wonder what will become of us all.

148 INT. LOUISA'S ROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

148

Ellen is plaiting Louisa's hair, pulling the bunches into place with sharp little tugs. Louisa refuses to admit she's being hurt. But Ellen has other means of inflicting distress.

ELLEN

There's men come, and your father gone, and they say he's got no money at all, and he's to go to prison.

She simpers with pleasure as she completes the plaits. Louisa keeps her face expressionless.

ELLEN

Funny how things come round in the end.

149 INT. LONG GALLERY, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

149

Constance and Elisabeth walk down the long empty room, seeking privacy to talk. Outside the tall windows the snow lies deep over the park.

CONSTANCE

Who knows? Maybe it's for the best. Sometimes this house feels like a prison.

She falls silent. Gazes out of the window at the snow.

ELISABETH

Mr Godwin loves it very much.

CONSTANCE

He did once. But the house died the day Amy - didn't die.

(Beat)

I wish she had died. Does that shock you?

(CONTINUED)

149 CONTINUED:

149

ELISABETH

No.

CONSTANCE

There's a law, of course, that forbids a man to marry his deceased wife's sister. An absurd law, so easily evaded. The Duke of Portland simply had his first marriage declared void.

ELISABETH

You think, if Mrs Godwin were to die, you and Mr Godwin would marry?

CONSTANCE

I don't pretend he loves me as he loved Amy. But ten years is a long time. He and I have grown older together. There's a kind of closeness in that.

She turns away from the window, shivering.

CONSTANCE

Such cold weather... But Charles is changing. Who knows what will become of us all?

150 INT. NURSERY CORRIDOR, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

150

Elisabeth comes down the corridor, on her way to the schoolroom. As she passes the door to her own room, she sees that it's open. She stops. Looks in.

151 INT. ELISABETH'S ROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

151

Louisa sits at the table, on the one upright chair, with her back to Elisabeth. She has the blue-bound sketchbook open before her.

ELISABETH

Louisa?

Louisa turns her face to her. She's making no sound, but she's crying. Elisabeth wants to take her in her arms, but that proud little body doesn't invite her embrace.

ELISABETH

What is it?

LOUISA

Has papa gone to prison?

(CONTINUED)

151 CONTINUED:

151

ELISABETH

To prison? No. He's gone to London.
He'll be back tonight.

Louisa takes this in. Pulls out a handkerchief, and dries the tears from her face. A quick glance at Elisabeth, and she looks away before speaking again.

LOUISA

Do you like me?

Beat.

ELISABETH

Yes. I like you.

LOUISA

Why?

ELISABETH

I just do.

Louisa turns her eyes to the blue sketchbook. Slowly, methodically, she turns the pages, looking at picture after picture. Absorbed. Elisabeth watches her without speaking. Her heart too full.

LOUISA

What do the words say?

ELISABETH

I'll tell you one day.

152 EXT. DRIVE, SELCOMBE PARK - DUSK

152

Snow falls in thick swirls. A carriage looms into view, its lamps glowing, snow on the coachman's hat and shoulders. At the fork in the drive, it comes to a stop. Charles gets out, as he did before. The carriage swings away down the drive to the stables, and Charles sets off on foot to the house.

ON CHARLES - Walking slowly through the falling snow. Gazing steadily ahead at the house. A new look on his face: as if something has been decided.

153 INT. NORTH CORRIDOR, SELCOMBE PLACE - DUSK

153

Elisabeth at a window, looking down into the entrance courtyard below. Charles, crossing the courtyard, oblivious of the falling snow. He stops at the door, and stands looking round. In no hurry to enter the house.

154 INT. GREAT HALL, SELCOMBE PLACE - DUSK

154

William helps Charles take off his snow-covered coat. Constance comes in from the South hall, hurrying towards him.

CONSTANCE

Charles! You're back! Is everything going to be alright?

Charles turns his face to meet her. Strangely calm.

CHARLES

No, Connie. Nothing's going to be alright.

155 INT. SITTING ROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT

155

Charles stands warming himself before the fire. Constance sits watching him. Charles is half-smiling at the irony of what has happened.

CHARLES

I pay a debt. Word gets round. Now they all want to be paid. Never sell land, my father said.

CONSTANCE

Are there so very many debts?

CHARLES

Oh, yes. The damage is well and truly done. The estate will have to go.

Constance is so profoundly shocked to hear this that she reaches out, instinctively, and takes his hand.

CONSTANCE

Charles! I'm so sorry.

Elisabeth appears in the doorway from the hall, behind Constance. Constance is looking down at Charles's hand in hers, feeling the sudden closeness between them. Charles sees Elisabeth, and half unaware that he's doing it, encloses Constance's hand between his two hands, and squeezes it. Constance closes her eyes, overwhelmed by emotion.

CONSTANCE

It's not right. Something should be done.

(CONTINUED)

155 CONTINUED:

155

CHARLES

No. It's not right. But nothing will be done.

CONSTANCE

What will happen to us?

CHARLES

Who knows?

His eyes are still on Elisabeth.

CHARLES

Maybe my father was right after all. I have to live my own damned life.

156 EXT. SELCOMBE PARK - NIGHT

156

Faint moonlight falls on house and park. The land white with snow. But snow is no longer falling.

157 INT. NORTH CORRIDOR, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT

157

Ice has formed on the inside of the panes of glass on the windows. A door opens softly.

158 INT. ELISABETH'S ROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT

158

Elisabeth lies asleep. From the corridor outside, the faint sound of passing footsteps.

159 INT. EAST CORRIDOR, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT

159

The door to Amy Godwin's room closes. Someone's just gone in. A shadow moves at the far end of the corridor. Constance stands there, in her night-clothes, looking down the dark space towards the now-closed door.

160 INT. AMY GODWIN'S ROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - NIGHT

160

Charles settles into the chair beside the bed, in the shadowy firelit room. Amy lies beneath a mound of quilts, her unseeing eyes open, gazing up at nothing.

CHARLES

Amy?

No sign that she hears him.

CHARLES

It's a cold night. Bitter cold. Mercifully cold.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES (CONT'D)

(Beat)

I love you, my darling.

(Beat)

I've often thought that this is a kind of prison for you. I've often thought that if you could speak, you'd ask me - to let you go.

He waits, watches. Nothing.

CHARLES

But I have to know you want it.

Her head begins to move. Very slowly, until the unseeing eyes meet his. He reaches for her hand beneath the covers, and draws it out to hold in his.

CHARLES

Show me, my darling. Show me what you want.

She looks at him, and maybe it's a trick of the light, maybe it's real, but she seems to be trying to communicate. The effort is almost too much for her, but for a fleeting moment, the ghost of an expression forms on her face: a look of longing. As soon as it comes it's gone again, and the blank mask returns. Then, slowly, her head turns away, exhausted, and her eyes close.

Charles lifts her hand to his lips and kisses it. Then he lays her hand back on the bed, and rises, and goes to the fireplace.

ON AMY - Her still face. Slow even breathing. Eyes closed.

A poker at work on the fire, breaking up the mass of burning coals. Charles's hands, sprinkling the coals with sand. More and more, until the red glow is extinguished.

Charles kneeling before the now-dead fire, head bowed, weeping.

He rises, goes to the window. Draws back the shutters. Forces open the stiff latch. It yields with a sharp crack. He stands still, to see if the noise has woken anybody. No sounds. He opens the window as wide as it will go, gasping at the inrush of icy air.

Then he goes to the bed, and draws back the top quilt, and lets it fall to the floor. And the second quilt. And the third. Now only a sheet covers the sleeping woman. This too,

(CONTINUED)

160 CONTINUED: (2)

160

gently, reverently, Charles draws back. Amy lies in a night-dress which does little to conceal her pitiful wasted body.

Charles takes up one of the quilts, wraps it close around himself, kneels down beside the bed, and prays. Voice soft and steady, tears streaming down his cheeks.

CHARLES

Lord, from you we come, to you we must return. Take my beloved wife home.

He kisses Amy gently on the lips.

CHARLES

Goodbye, my darling. Goodbye.

161 EXT. SELCOMBE BEACON - DAWN

161

Sunrise over snow-covered Selcombe Beacon. The clear radiant dawn of a cold, cold day. A band of cloud rimmed by fire. The land folded in silver shadow.

162 EXT. COALSHED, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAWN

162

Thomas the footman, breath smoking in the icy air, attacks the stack with a pick-axe. As the frozen coals tumble free, he gathers them in a large bucket.

163 INT. AMY GODWIN'S ROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAWN

163

The window is closed and shuttered once more. Thomas enters the room backwards, heaving the big coal bucket. He crosses the room, following his habitual routine, and is almost by the fireplace when he realises all is not as usual. He puts down the bucket, and looks at the dead fire. Then he turns to look at the woman in the bed. She lies there as usual, covered by quilts. He stares. No movement. Hesitantly, he touches her cheek. Stone cold.

LATER

A physician, DR GEDDES, straightens up after his examination of the dead woman. Constance is by his side. Hannah, the nurse, behind her. Charles by the window, his back to the room. A fire burns once more in the grate.

GEDDES

Some time in the night, I'd say. It was a very cold night. I understand the fire had gone out.

(CONTINUED)

163 CONTINUED:

163

CONSTANCE

Yes.

GEDDES

That was unfortunate.

HANNAH

It wasn't me, sir. I'll swear on the good book -

CONSTANCE

Nobody's blaming you, Hannah.

She looks across at Charles.

CONSTANCE

It's been ten years. At least now she's at peace.

GEDDES

Indeed. Indeed.

Charles turns. His eyes are red from weeping.

CHARLES

I'd like you to leave me alone with her now, please. All of you.

Constance nods at Geddes, and they leave the room, followed by the nurse.

Charles kneels down by his dead wife's bed, as he has done so many times before. He lays down his head on the pillow by hers and gives her one last kiss.

CHARLES

(very low)

Rest, now. Rest at last.

164 INT. DINING ROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

164

Constance eats her breakfast alone, in silence. Her cheeks are very slightly flushed, with inner excitement. Her eyes look far away into nothing.

Elisabeth enters.

ELISABETH

I'm so sorry.

CONSTANCE

Yes...

(CONTINUED)

164 CONTINUED:

164

Footsteps pass by outside the door. Constance is alert at once, recognising Charles's step. She rises.

CONSTANCE

Excuse me.

165 INT. LIBRARY, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

165

Charles sits alone, staring into space. On a table beside him, long ago letters. The box in which they've been kept stands open, alongside a miniature of Amy as she was at the time of their engagement.

A knock on the door.

CHARLES

Yes?

Constance enters. Charles looks up at her, at first unseeingly, then slowly returning to the present.

CONSTANCE

You haven't eaten.

CHARLES

No.

CONSTANCE

Are you alright?

CHARLES

Am I alright? Yes. I think so.

CONSTANCE

I loved Amy dearly. But I know - I know - this is for the best.

CHARLES

You really believe that?

CONSTANCE

Yes. I do.

CHARLES

Dear Connie. You've been good to me, all these years.

CONSTANCE

And you've been good to me, Charles.

CHARLES

So much is changing. What's to become of us all?

(CONTINUED)

CONSTANCE

As your friend Mr Taylor said, the
future's what we make it.

Suddenly, she drops to her knees before him, and taking his
hand in hers, kisses it. For a moment, Charles neither moves
nor speaks. Then, gently, he withdraws his hand from hers.

CHARLES

I'm sorry.

These two words fills Constance's heart with a cold dread.

CHARLES

If I've given you reason to believe...

He comes to a stop, embarrassed. Constance rises to her feet.

CONSTANCE

Don't say any more.

CHARLES

I never meant to mislead you.

CONSTANCE

No. Of course not. Just a mistake,
that's all. I'm sorry to have
disturbed you.

She turns away, shaking with humiliation, and makes for the
door.

CHARLES

Connie.

She stops, her back to him, so he doesn't see the tears in
her eyes.

CONSTANCE

Yes, Charles?

CHARLES

You know how much I loved her. Don't
you?

CONSTANCE

Yes, Charles. I do.

She bows her head once, and goes.

166 INT. AMY GODWIN'S ROOM, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

166

The room is almost unrecognisable. Cool and light. The grate swept, empty. The bed smooth. And in the chair by the bed, Elisabeth. Staring into space.

The sound of the door opening. She looks up. Charles. He comes into the room, shuts the door behind him.

For a moment, neither of them speak. Then:

ELISABETH

Was it you?

Beat.

CHARLES

Yes.

Elisabeth gives the slightest nod. She expected it, but it's still a shock.

CHARLES

I think it was what she wanted. But I'll never know.

(Beat)

Did I do wrong?

ELISABETH

Of course.

CHARLES

Then I must live with that.

ELISABETH

As must I.

CHARLES

You? You've done nothing.

She looks up at him, her eyes burning.

ELISABETH

Nothing? I've wanted you, and Louisa, with all my mind and heart and will, for seven long years. It seems to me that my desire has destroyed everything that stood in its way. Your wife. Your home. Your world. I never knew there was so much power in desire.

Charles is mesmerised by her fierce energy.

(CONTINUED)

166 CONTINUED:

166

CHARLES

And if it were so - are you sorry?

A long beat.

ELISABETH

No.

CHARLES

Then we deserve each other.

He holds out his hand. Elisabeth rises. Comes to him. Hesitates. Then slowly puts her hand in his.

ELISABETH

May God have mercy on us.

167 EXT. SELCOMBE CHURCHYARD - DAY

167

A group of mourners stand in the snow-covered churchyard round an open grave, shivering in the winter wind. Charles holding Louisa. Constance. Elisabeth. Many other gentry, villagers, and servants.

The RECTOR reads the Prayer for the Dead.

RECTOR

I heard a voice from heaven saying
unto me, Write, From henceforth
blessed are the dead which die in
the Lord.

Three faces, each turned towards the grave, each knowing their lives are changed for ever. Charles. Constance. Elisabeth. Louisa looks from face to face, and her eyes come to rest on Elisabeth. She stares and stares.

RECTOR

Even so saith the Spirit; for they
rest from their labours. Lord have
mercy upon us.

WIDE - The mourners leave the churchyard, some making for waiting carriages, some on foot. Tiny figures moving slowly between gravestones, beneath the long white hills, under the vast cloud-laden sky.

One figure remains motionless by the newly-filled grave. Constance.

Elisabeth looks back and sees her standing alone. She makes her way back to join her. Stands waiting, a pace behind.

(CONTINUED)

167 CONTINUED:

167

Constance turns at last. Her face is stained with tears of utter misery.

CONSTANCE

I don't know why I'm crying. It's what I wanted, isn't it?

ELISABETH

I'm sorry.

CONSTANCE

It seems I was wrong about Charles.

Beat.

ELISABETH

I know.

Constance stares at her. Now, at last, she understands.

CONSTANCE

Does he love you?

ELISABETH

Yes.

CONSTANCE

Do you love him?

ELISABETH

Yes.

CONSTANCE

I would have made him happy.

(Beat)

Love him for me too.

Proud, head held high, she turns and walks away through the gravestones.

168 EXT. SELCOMBE BEACON - DAY

168

Charles rides the crest of the snow-covered Downs, with Louisa on the saddle before him. As they ride, he holds her tight with one arm, and their eyes range over the wide familiar views. The rolling Weald. The distant sea. They ride to the end of the line of hills, the Beacon itself. Here he brings his horse to a stop, and looks all the way round, in a great circle.

CHARLES

Three hundred years. And now it's gone, and I don't even care.

(CONTINUED)

168 CONTINUED:

168

 LOUISA
Where will we go?

 CHARLES
Far away. America. Start a new life.

 LOUISA
With her?

 CHARLES
Her?

He turns Louisa's face so that he can look at her. Why pretend he doesn't understand?

 CHARLES
Yes. With her.

 LOUISA
She's my mother, isn't she?

Beat.

 CHARLES
How do you know?

 LOUISA
I just do.

169 INT. LONG GALLERY, SELCOMBE PLACE - DAY

169

Elisabeth stands alone in the long empty space. Louisa enters, some way off. For a moment, she stands still, looking towards Elisabeth. Elisabeth looks back. Neither speak.

Then Louisa makes her way slowly towards Elisabeth, turning this way and that as she goes, as if she has nothing of importance to do but follow the idle whim of the moment.

 LOUISA
Why did you give me away?

 ELISABETH
I didn't. I sold you.

 LOUISA
How much for?

 ELISABETH
Five hundred pounds.

 LOUISA
Is that a lot?

(CONTINUED)

169 CONTINUED:

169

ELISABETH

It's a fortune.

Louisa comes to a stop at last, by Elisabeth's side. A beat of silence. Then:

LOUISA

I'm glad it was a lot.

She's looking up, Elisabeth looking down. She moves one small step, leans her face against Elisabeth.

CLOSE ON LOUISA'S HAND - As it comes up to Elisabeth's waist, and slowly, slowly, slowly, inches round into an embrace.

Elisabeth, trembling, rests one hand on Louisa's head. Strokes her hair. Slowly sinks down to her knees.

ELISABETH

(softly)

My darling...

Louisa twines both arms tight around her, and suddenly she's hugging her fiercely tight: for the first time, embracing her with all her body and heart. Elisabeth kisses her, weeping, releasing all the love she's held back for so long. Louisa rubs her face against Elisabeth's, and murmurs one single word over and over.

LOUISA

Mama, mama, mama, mama...

170 EXT. LAKE, SELCOMBE PARK - DAY

170

Elisabeth and Louisa, facing each other, drifting slowly away. A dreamlike gliding. Eyes fixed on each other, no longer afraid to look. Gliding further and further away.

WIDER NOW - The lake, no longer frozen. The little boat on its way to the lake house. Louisa taking Elisabeth to her secret place.

The boat moves almost silently, sending out glimmering ripples all the way to the shore. Far off now, it reaches the lake house. Elisabeth waits while Louisa climbs out, and ties the rope to the steps. Then she too climbs out. Louisa holds out her hand. She takes it.

For a moment, they stand there, two distant figures on the lake house steps. They speak to each other, but we hear nothing. Then Louisa takes Elisabeth's hand, and going ahead, opens the lake house door wide. She goes in, and Elisabeth follows, and the door closes behind them.

(CONTINUED)

170 CONTINUED:

170

Silence. The lake still again. Only moving shadows in the faraway lake house, and the reflections of clouds passing over the water.

171 EXT. DRIVE, SELCOMBE PARK - DAY

171

CLOSE ON CHARLES - Coming through the archway, walking slowly backwards down the drive, his eyes on the house. He's leaving for the last time. A thick mist hangs over the park.

As he reaches the low column, he stops and raises his hands. Louisa, who's been waiting for him, climbs onto his shoulders.

WIDER NOW - Charles turns, balancing Louisa on his shoulders, and walks away down the drive: a strange sight in the mist.

A carriage passes, CLOSE TO CAMERA, and slows down as it reaches Charles and Louisa. The carriage door opens, and Charles swings Louisa down from his shoulders. Elisabeth, inside, takes her from him, into the carriage.

CLOSE TO CAMERA, a long covered hearse-like GOODS WAGON is rumbling past.

Further away, Charles now climbs into the slow-moving carriage himself, and the carriage door closes on him.

A SECOND WAGON is PASSING CAMERA, and a THIRD. A line of dark wagons rolling down the drive.

The lead carriage now picks up speed, heading into the mist. Still the wagons roll, FOUR, FIVE, SIX, in a seemingly endless procession.

And now the faraway carriage is swallowed up in the whiteness. Behind it, the wagons roll on, like barges sailing away into a silent ocean, towards unknown lands.

FADE TO BLACK

END CREDITS