

1

1

A field of corn, golden under a blue sky.

A breeze blows, swirling and sighing through the crop like an inland sea.

CHARLIE plays through the field, whistling to himself, a boy used to his own company.

A BOOM somewhere down the valley, the sound of dynamite exploding.

BIRDS scatter.

CHARLIE stops, more intrigued than afraid.

2

2

GWEN is struggling to clean off the blood-stained image of the YOUNG WOMAN WITH A BOOK OF LIGHT.

Push slowly into this strange, foreboding image.

BOOM.

3

3

NATHAN is taking tea with HARRIET in the study of the vicarage, has been checking on her progress.

\*

She looks good, healthy and confident.

DENNING - the proud, attentive father - is labelling geological specimens.

NATHAN

NATHAN takes Gabriel's drawing out of his bag.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
Something like this.

HARRIET shakes her head, it means nothing.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
Could you have seen the image  
somewhere else in the house? On my  
desk?

HARRIET  
I don't think so. I'm sorry, Mr  
Appleby, it means nothing to me.

BOOM.

4

4

CHARLOTTE is washing blood from her nightdress in the basin,  
scrubbing at it with her handkerchief.

GWEN whistles into the room, her arms full of fresh linen and  
towels, not expecting to see her mistress standing there.

GWEN  
(Mortified)  
Sorry, Mrs Appleby, I didn't know  
you were here.

GWEN sees that CHARLOTTE is upset, sees the blood in the  
basin, knows exactly what is happening.

GWEN (CONT'D)  
Here, ma'am, take a fresh towel.

CHARLOTTE  
Thank you, Gwen.

GWEN hands her mistress a fresh towel - as she  
surreptitiously pockets the handkerchief.

5

5

A pretty valley, a hive of activity today.

A young Northern industrial surveyor (SMITH) and his  
ASSISTANTS are surveying the rock stratus of the valley.

SMITH hunkers down over a detonator.

SMITH  
Heads down, gentlemen!

The ASSISTANTS squat down and SMITH detonates the dynamite.

BOOM!

The dynamite rips into the landscape.



NATHAN (CONT'D)  
Shouldn't you be working in the  
fields?

CHARLIE  
Yes, sir, I was just on my way.

CHARLOTTE can see her work force are still worried about the explosions.

CHARLOTTE  
It's just the surveyors at Brockley  
Combe, pay it no mind.

AGNES  
Why do they have to blow great  
holes in the valley, ma'am?

CHARLOTTE  
They're surveying the underlying  
rock to see if it's capable of  
taking a viaduct over the valley.

GIDEON  
A what, ma'am?

CHARLOTTE  
A viaduct, Gideon. To take the  
railway across the valley.

GIDEON grumbles to himself.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)  
They are here because Mr Appleby  
petitioned for them to be here, so  
they will be made welcome, is that  
clear?

AGNES, GIDEON and the others do not look convinced.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)  
If we can get a railway halt near  
here we could churn our butter in  
the afternoon and it would be on  
the breakfast tables of Bristol and  
London by the next morning...  
imagine that!

They all just stare back at her, dead-eyed.

BOOM!

10

10

NATHAN - excited - watches as SMITH walks forward to inspect  
the rock strata his latest explosion has exposed.

SMITH is working in a pretty valley, surrounded by the tools  
of his trade: theodolite, tripod, tape. And a wooden box of  
dynamite.

A couple of ASSISTANTS make drawings, measurements.



She looks around, careful not to be seen. Then GWEN takes out CHARLOTTE's handkerchief and ties it around a lower branch.

12

12

The OLD MAN is still walking towards us through another lonely landscape. Slow. Relentless.

13

13

Dusk beyond The Wheatsheaf pub.

14

14

The pub is quiet this evening, just GIDEON emptying his cup of cider and proffering it to SIMON for a refill.

The ENGINEER'S ASSISTANTS laugh loudly at some joke.

GIDEON glares over at them, noticed by SIMON.

SIMON

I remember when old Mrs Appleby grubbed out the Tremlett Bitter orchards and replaced 'em with Dabinett. You were in here every night, moaning your head off about the evils of progress.

GIDEON

There's nothing wrong with Tremletts. Who wants a train, anyways? Nasty, noisy buggers they is. I expect.

SIMON

Shhh, the engineers will hear you.

GIDEON

The engineers... No good will come of it, you mark my words.

SIMON shakes his head.

SIMON

'Tis like talking to a wall.

GIDEON

I'm just saying - as my dear old granfer used to say to me -  
(Lowers voice)  
- what lies beneath should be left beneath.



15

15

That field of corn, now under a deep blue summer evening sky.  
Stars.

Something or someone is moving through the corn towards us.

16

16

The harvest moon yellow in the sky.

NATHAN stands on the jetty fishing, watching his float. But his mind is not on the float, but on the dark water.

CHARLOTTE lies on her back, her legs up, feet against the bark of a tree. She is only wearing her underwear, her tousled hair fanned out on the grass.

NATHAN

Come on, Jonah, come to Nathan.

CHARLOTTE

Jonah?

NATHAN

An enormous carp, only ever landed by my father.

CHARLOTTE

The fish have names. Oh my God.

A beat.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

How did it go today?

NATHAN

Apart from nearly blowing Charlie to kingdom come... pretty well, I think. Smith is optimistic he can put a good case to the railway.

NATHAN reels in, walks back towards CHARLOTTE, sees his wife on her back with her feet half way up a tree.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

What exactly are you doing?

CHARLOTTE

Just giving nature a helping hand.

NATHAN lies on his elbows above her.

NATHAN

We will get there, I promise you.

CHARLOTTE  
I thought coming down here to live,  
away from London, all the peace and  
quiet...

NATHAN  
We know there is no medical reason  
you cannot conceive. We just have  
to be patient.

CHARLOTTE  
I know. It's just... I want your  
baby, Nathan Appleby.

NATHAN dips his head down and kisses her on the lips.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)  
(To the moon)  
I want your baby!

17

17

Something or someone is looking up at the lit windows of the  
row of modest cottages.

We see PETER and MAUD in one window.

Then AGNES trying to get her children - BATHSHEBA and two  
other DAUGHTERS - washed and into bed in another.

CHARLIE is outside the family cottage, holding up his lamp so  
that he can check doors are locked, check that nobody is  
around.

GIDEON staggers past, on his way home from the pub.

GIDEON  
Good night, Charlie. We be all safe  
under your protection.

GIDEON salutes Charlie and weaves off down the lane.

AGNES appears in the doorway, watches her son with a love she  
rarely shows... and just a little sadness.

AGNES  
Bed, Charlie.

CHARLIE holds his lamp up, illuminating the first few feet of  
the night.

CHARLIE  
All safe, mother.

AGNES and CHARLIE enter the cottage.

The door is closed and locked.

18

18

NATHAN is at his desk. A lovely photograph of Harriet standing outside the vicarage, clearly taken by Charlotte, is propped up in front of him.

He is listening to the crackly cylinders, an unpleasant sound on a summer's night -

ABEL NORTH

*Except for the wenches. The young ones. Like fresh fruit waiting to be plucked. I'm the man to pluck 'em.*

CHARLOTTE

Do we have to listen to that horrible man?

NATHAN is working. We see the chapter heading: *Harriet Denning*. The page is blank. Instead of writing, NATHAN is doodling the image of the YOUNG WOMAN WITH A BOOK OF LIGHT.

A breeze lifts some papers on NATHAN's desk.

TOBY the deerhound growls.

NATHAN

Sshhh, boy, it's just the wind.

But TOBY is not mollified, barks.

NATHAN gets up, moves to the window.

CHARLOTTE

What is it?

Through the open window NATHAN can hear the laughter and shrieks of CHILDREN.

NATHAN

Just children playing.

CHARLOTTE

At this time of night?

19

19

BATHSHEBA and the other CHILDREN huddle together for warmth as they sleep.

A hessian sheet divides the room, leaving CHARLIE alone on his small truckle bed by the window.

Something makes him sit bolt upright in bed. Staring at the shutters.

A long beat.

David... Harrington... Abraham... **Henry**... Benjamin...  
Ebenezer...

CHARLIE gets out of bed. Slowly, slowly walks towards the shutters.

A floorboard creaks under his bare feet.

CHARLIE reaches the shutters.

David... Harrington... Abraham... **Henry**... Benjamin...  
Ebenezer.....

CHARLIE lifts the bolt, opens the shutters.

Far off in the field opposite the cottage, so far they're hard to see in the summer night, are a line of BOYS. They are all holding hands and staring at CHARLIE.

A long beat.

Then one of them beckons for CHARLIE to join them.

CHARLIE quickly shuts the shutters and -

BATHSHEBA  
Charlie? What are you doing?

It's his sleepy, nosey younger sister, rubbing her eyes and looking up at him.

A fresh morning.

GIDEON is already out in the field, sharpening the scythes for the day ahead.

FARM WORKERS start to appear, ready for their day's labour.

He's already uncomfortable being in the formal room in the house and is very uncomfortable being interviewed by a woman. He sits and mangles his hat in his hands.

CHARLOTTE

Where do you stand on the new model traction engines, Mr Woolford?

WOOLFORD

I'd never buy one, I know that.

CHARLOTTE

And why would that be?

WOOLFORD

I'd let some other fool take all the risk and rent one when I needed it.

CHARLOTTE

But the "other fool" might become a rich man and you'll be forever under obligation to him.

WOOLFORD

I saw your shiny new traction on the way in, ma'am. Broken, is it?

CHARLOTTE doesn't like the twinkle in WOOLFORD's eye.

CHARLOTTE

(Reading)

You do seem to move around a lot. Why would that be?

WOOLFORD

I've come a long way, ma'am. I think it only fair I get to speak to the master.

CHARLOTTE

Except he is not here, is he? But I am here, Mr Woolford, and I appear to be a sentient being. Why did you leave your last position?

WOOLFORD

I had some problems with one of the workers.

CHARLOTTE

What sort of problems?

WOOLFORD

I formed a liking to one of the parlour maids, if you must know.

CHARLOTTE

Oh. And was this liking reciprocated by the parlour maid?

WOOLFORD looks at CHARLOTTE like he doesn't understand the question.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)  
Did the girl like you back?

WOOLFORD does not want to discuss this.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)  
I'll be writing to your employers either way.

WOOLFORD  
I thought so at the time. Seems I was wrong, according to that strumpet.

CHARLOTTE studies the man for a moment, far from impressed.

CHARLOTTE  
I don't think you'd like it here, Mr Woolford.

23

23

The WORKERS are still out in the fields, loading up the carts.

Everyone is needed - GIDEON, PETER, JACK, AGNES, GWEN, LIZZIE, CHARLIE, BATHSHEBA - out in the fields at this critical time of the year.

NATHAN, sleeves rolled up, works next to his workers.

NATHAN  
How's that weather looking, Gideon?

GIDEON  
Set fair, sir, set fair.

PETER HARE is looking at Nathan. Nathan notices him. Peter - embarrassed - breaks his gaze and walks more quickly away.

GIDEON (CONT'D)  
Maud Hare's son, Peter. Never been a sociable lad.

Nathan's interest is piqued.

GIDEON (CONT'D)  
Bookworm.

NATHAN looks up as CHARLOTTE stomps across the field towards him.

CHARLOTTE  
It's like 1794 down here. It



BATHSHEBA  
'Twas the Red Boys, sir.

CHARLIE  
(Angry, at Bathsheba)  
Shut up! You shut up!

24

24

NATHAN and CHARLIE sit in the shade of a hay wagon, the WORKERS still toiling in the field behind them.

NATHAN  
So Mr Smith said there's a bacterium called Chromatiaceae that thrives in oxygen-depleted water and turns it red.

CHARLIE  
'Twas really just water?

NATHAN  
Been trapped beneath the earth for centuries.

A beat.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
(Offhand)  
Tell me about these boys.

Nothing from CHARLIE.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
Are they like imagined friends?

CHARLIE  
Only children have friends like that.

NATHAN  
You have your responsibilities and I have mine. If something is threatening our community we must share the knowledge, you and I.

CHARLIE is touched by this, calmed by NATHAN's quiet strength of personality.

CHARLIE  
They came for me. In the night.

NATHAN  
And what did they want?

CHARLIE  
For me to go with them.

NATHAN  
Go where?

CHARLIE  
I don't know.

NATHAN  
And you saw them again just now? In  
the field?

CHARLIE nods and NATHAN sees that the boy is genuinely  
frightened.

He stands up, pulls CHARLIE up by the hand.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
Do you know what a nightmare is,  
Charlie?

CHARLIE  
A dream that goes bad?

NATHAN and CHARLIE start walking back towards the WORKERS.

NATHAN  
If you've had an unusual day, or a  
difficult one - and, let us be  
honest, you and I got rained on by  
blood, or so we thought - your  
brain needs to deal with that  
stress, to re-calibrate its  
equilibrium.

CHARLIE  
They were real, sir.

NATHAN  
No matter how real they seem they  
are just pictures in your head -  
and pictures cannot harm you.

CHARLIE looks up at NATHAN, so wants to believe him.

CHARLIE  
What do I do if they come again?

NATHAN  
Let them come. We are men and they  
are pictures - let them come.

NATHAN puts an arm around CHARLIE's shoulders.

25

25

The far bend of a high-hedged Somerset lane. The OLD MAN never stops moving. Where is he going? What will he do when he gets there?

26

26

Shepzoy House, silhouetted against the dark blue summer night.

A few of the windows glow orange with lamp-light.

27

27

GWEN is stirring a saucepan on the ancient range.

CHARLOTTE comes into the kitchen, sniffing the air and wrinkling her nose.

CHARLOTTE

It's you, Gwen. For one awful moment I thought Cook was boiling up her offal again. What are you doing?

CHARLOTTE peers into the murky, steaming pot.

GWEN

Just a little something, ma'am.

CHARLOTTE

A little something of what?

GWEN

For you and Mr Appleby, to help you get with child.

CHARLOTTE

I've been pushed and prodded by some of the most expensive doctors in London, I don't think some boiled grass is going to make much difference.

GWEN

It works, ma'am.

A beat. GWEN holds her mistress' eye.

CHARLOTTE

(Lowering voice)  
What's in it?

CHARLOTTE peers into the saucepan.

GWEN  
There's cabbage leaves, mandrake.  
Marjoram, thyme, parsley, the root  
of worm fern and...

CHARLOTTE  
What?

GWEN  
The tail of a slow worm.

CHARLOTTE  
What's that for?

GWEN  
Added potency.

CHARLOTTE  
And all the raspberries. What are  
they for?

GWEN  
They're to take away the taste of  
the slow worm.

NATHAN sits at his desk writing up his case notes. He looks

The French windows open wide. Then gently shut again.

29

29

30

30

Something or someone is approaching the cottage.

31

31

The last embers of a fire in the hearth.

AGNES is asleep in her chair, snoring happily.

BATHSHEBA and her SISTERS, huddled and asleep.

CHARLIE wakes with a start, sits up.

He's staring at those shutters...

*David... Harrington... Abraham... Henry... Benjamin...  
Ebenezer.....*

CHARLIE gets out of bed.

CHARLIE  
Pictures in my head.

CHARLOTTE (CONT' D)  
"Why are you so excited, beloved  
wife?"

NATHAN is watching TOBY pace and whine.

NATHAN  
Sorry?

CHARLOTTE  
Strawberries.

NATHAN just looks at her.

CHARLOTTE (CONT' D)  
Arable crops are susceptible to the  
vicissitudes of the weather, yes?  
Turning this place into a dairy  
farm would decimate the community -

NATHAN  
And will never happen.

CHARLOTTE  
But strawberries. If we get our  
branch line we .S3roaccess markets?

A noise down the far end of the valley makes NATHAN turn.

The DOG starts to whimper -

NATHAN  
Toby? What's the matter, boy?

Suddenly Toby turns and runs back towards the house.

Now NATHAN hears it - the sound of a vehicle's engine.

Even odder, two blazing lights are turned on, blinding NATHAN.

The lights start to rush towards him down the lane.

NATHAN turns and runs. Stumbling, feeling the lights getting closer, the screaming engine getting closer -

AGNES  
Mr Appleby, thank God. Is Charlie with you?

NATHAN spins around to see a worried AGNES in her nightdress, a lamp in her hand.

NATHAN turns and looks back at where the lights came from.

Nothing.

NATHAN  
Charlie? No, of course not.

NATHAN sees how concerned the woman is by the light from her lamp.

AGNES  
He's gone missing, sir.

34

34

NATHAN looks for Charlie.

NATHAN  
Charlie?!

Nothing.

NATHAN is about to walk on when he hears - or thinks he hears - the sound of CHILDREN'S LAUGHTER coming from the wood.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
Charlie! Is that you?

Nothing.

NATHAN walks towards the wood.

35

35

NATHAN pushes deep into the wood.

In here the thick foliage of the canopy dominates.

He holds his oil lamp up and it picks out the shadows of the trees.

A BIRD takes wing, complaining off into the night.

Again, NATHAN hears the sound of CHILDREN PLAYING.

NATHAN pushes on into the wood, deeper and deeper.

NATHAN  
Charlie?

The noise of CHILDREN PLAYING instantly stops. Silence.

Then NATHAN sees ahead of him, in a natural clearing in the wood, a boy. It's CHARLIE.

CHARLIE is playing a game of "It" - but his playmates are either not there or are invisible.

NATHAN watches intently as CHARLIE rushes around, laughing. He is obviously not catching anyone but still seems to be enjoying himself, in a manic, concentrated way.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
Charlie.

CHARLIE turns to look at NATHAN. It's as if he has been awakened from sleep-walking, as he blinks at NATHAN, completely confused.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
It's alright, son, let's get you home.

CHARLIE just stares at NATHAN. Then his legs go from under him and he collapses.

By the time NATHAN reaches CHARLIE the boy is half-conscious, confused.

NATHAN picks CHARLIE up, carries him in his arms.

NATHAN peers into the darkness but sees nothing. But he feels it... an unfriendly force that does not want NATHAN taking this boy from the wood.



NATHAN picks up his pace, despite the dead weight of the boy, crashing through the undergrowth.

CHARLIE looks back... the RED BOYS are standing there, holding hands, watching him go.

NATHAN almost runs and... suddenly bursts out of the dark wood and back into open countryside again.

A line of WORKERS, lit by torches, fanned out across the field, looking for CHARLIE.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Agnes!

AGNES

Charlie! What the hell are you playing at, boy?

As AGNES runs towards him NATHAN looks back at the wood.

Hears - or thinks he hears - the sound of a CHILD LAUGHING.

36

36

CHARLIE is exhausted, but he looks fierce, surly.

NATHAN is at his side, a concerned AGNES behind him, BATHSHEBA and her SIBLINGS peering out from over the hessian divide.

NATHAN offers the boy a sleeping draught.

NATHAN

Take this, it will help you sleep.

CHARLIE moves his head so the draught misses his mouth -

AGNES

(Stern)

Charlie!

CHARLIE reluctantly downs the drink.

NATHAN

What was happening in the wood?

CHARLIE

None of your business.

AGNES is about to scold her son but NATHAN gestures for her not to.

CHARLIE's eyes flicker, he's very tired.

CHARLIE  
I'm not to talk to you no more.

NATHAN  
Why's that?

CHARLIE  
Cos you're a bastard.

AGNES  
That is enough!

AGNES is shocked by her son's surly tone - shoos BATHSHEBA and the others away.

CHARLIE  
You're all bastards and liars.

CHARLIE falls asleep.

AGNES wants to say something but is concerned she will be speaking out of turn.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Agnes.

AGNES

He's been worried, sir, I won't lie to you.

NATHAN

About what?

AGNES

The changes. Your mother dying and traction engines and John and... he is worried about what is to come of us. We all are.

Out on NATHAN, recognising the enormity of what he and Charlotte are doing to this community.

38

38

Shepzoy House on a fresh, bright summer's morning.

39

39

NATHAN is scrambling around in a cupboard full of battered old toys, when he becomes aware of CHARLOTTE standing in the doorway.

CHARLOTTE

What on earth are you doing?

NATHAN

Just looking for something for Charlie.

CHARLOTTE

I have had the most brilliant idea.

NATHAN

I know, you told me. Strawberries.

CHARLOTTE

Even more brilliant than that.

NATHAN

They're here somewhere, I know they are.

CHARLOTTE  
Are you listening to me? I'm  
talking about the future of Shepzoy  
and you're rummaging in a cupboard.

NATHAN finds what he was looking for - a hessian sack. He  
looks in, smiles to himself, delighted.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)  
Nathan -

NATHAN stands and faces his wife.

NATHAN  
Yes.

CHARLOTTE  
(Puzzled)  
Yes, what?

NATHAN  
Yes, I think it is a brilliant  
idea.

CHARLOTTE  
What is?

NATHAN  
You being our new farm manager.

CHARLOTTE smiles at him.

CHARLOTTE  
You really think I could do it?

NATHAN  
(Genuine)  
I think you will be the best thing  
that ever happened to this old  
place.

CHARLOTTE squeals with delight, throws her arms around him.

40

40

CHARLIE looks tired and drawn and tense and a bit sheepish.

NATHAN sits down in front of him, carrying a hessian bag.

NATHAN  
How are you feeling? Not so good,  
your mother says.

Nothing from CHARLIE.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
Am I still a bastard?

Nothing.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
And a liar?

CHARLIE  
You said they were pictures in my head.

NATHAN  
Yes, I did.

CHARLIE  
That was a lie.

It's clear that CHARLIE is surly, tired.

NATHAN  
I brought you something. I was clearing out a cupboard and found these...

NATHAN tips the bag up and about twenty much-loved TOY SOLDIERS, chipped and battered, fall out.

A little spark of life in CHARLIE's eyes now.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
We must have fought the Battle of Balaclava at least a hundred times, Gabriel and I, and these soldiers never once let us down.

CHARLIE picks up one of the soldiers, turns it in his hand.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
When I found you in the woods last night were you playing with the boys?

CHARLIE nods.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
How many boys were there?

Nothing from CHARLIE.

CHARLIE  
I don't remember.

NATHAN  
Did they surround you, like this?

NATHAN positions the soldiers in a circle around the "Charlie" soldier.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
Are they good boys, would you say?  
Or bad boys?

CHARLIE knocks them over with a sweep of his hand.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
Your mother said you were worried  
about having to leave the farm,  
this cottage. I give you my word,  
Charlie, that for as long as an  
Appleby owns Shepzoy House you and  
your family will live and work  
beside us.

If NATHAN expected relief and gratitude he is disappointed.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
No work for you today, you stay  
here and play.

NATHAN is about to leave the bedroom when -

CHARLIE  
I don't belong here.

NATHAN just looks at this troubled boy.

NATHAN  
Who said you don't belong here?

CHARLIE looks NATHAN square in the eye, almost a challenge,  
and then turns his back on him.

41

41

A slightly nervous CHARLOTTE addresses her WORKERS.

GWEN is next to her mistress.

CHARLOTTE  
I wanted to gather you together  
this morning with some exciting  
news. Well, I'm excited and I very  
much hope you will be.

GWEN glares at the WORKERS, who look back, expressionless.

GWEN

Oh they will be, ma'am, don't you worry about that.

A BOOM from down the valley, where the surveyors are still hard at work.

CHARLOTTE

From this moment on, I am going to be the farm manager.

Gobsmacked faces look back at her.

Silence.

GWEN

That is marvellous news, ma'am.

CHARLOTTE

Now I am not that experienced, as many of you know and have kindly pointed out. But I am willing to learn. I will learn, I give you my word on that. I will be loyal and devoted and I expect that same loyalty and devotion back. I will be the first one at work in the morning and the last one here at night.

CHARLOTTE smiles but gets only the same stares back.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Right, that's all I wanted to say, I think. There's a lot of preparation to do before the harvest.

CHARLOTTE walks back towards the house.

GWEN glares at the WORK FORCE for their lack of support, hurries after her mistress.

GWEN

That went well, ma'am.

BOOM.

The WORKERS watch CHARLOTTE and GWEN walk away.

JACK

What did I say, friends? We're all off to Hell in a handcart.

CHARLIE playing with the TOY SOLDIERS. He positions them in a very distinctive curve.



AGNES

Life was not kind to her and she became... she fell into low company. She died, worn out with disease.

AGNES opens a crude cupboard, finds a hidden wooden box.

The key to it is hidden elsewhere, in a secret panel.

Finally, she opens the box. A few paltry possessions and... a lock of hair tied around a rolled letter.

AGNES (CONT'D)

A lock of Ruth's hair, given to me the day before she died. You see the different hair, threaded through?

NATHAN nods.

AGNES (CONT'D)

A baby's hair, sir.

NATHAN

(Realising)  
Charlie's?

AGNES

He was just six months old when his mother died. I took him for my own.

NATHAN

Does he know?

AGNES shakes her head.

AGNES

I'm to give him this letter when I do see fit. It tells him everything.

NATHAN glances out at BATHSHEBA and her SIBLINGS playing.

AGNES (CONT'D)

I have loved him as my own. Fiercer than my own, if anything, cos I did know where he came from. What good would it do him to know he was not mine? Me, who loves him more than life itself.

AGNES takes the entwined locks back, puts it back in the box and locks it away.

NATHAN admires this strong, protective woman.

NATHAN  
You have done a fine job, Agnes.  
You will know when the time is  
right.

A SCREAM from outside has them both running for the door and -

45

45

- running outside.

BATHSHEBA and her SIBLINGS are rooted to the spot.

BATHSHEBA points -

CHARLIE is standing there, his face blood-red.

46

46

SMITH and his COLLEAGUES are having rest, eating a meal. \*

SMITH is intrigued to see - at a distance - the OLD MAN on the lip of a depression in the land, staring down into. \*

SMITH  
What's he up to? \*

47

47

A wild RABBIT.

NATHAN and CHARLIE - both holding shotguns - watch the oblivious RABBIT.

NATHAN  
Align the gun with your face, back  
it into your shoulder. Bend your  
front knee, back straight and -

CHARLIE fires the gun and misses the RABBIT by a country mile.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
Getting closer. Definitely getting  
closer.

NATHAN hands CHARLIE his shotgun, takes the discharged one and reloads it for CHARLIE.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
I always thought it would be my own  
son I'd teach to shoot.

CHARLIE  
I liked Gabriel. We played  
together.

NATHAN

I know you did. So you'll have to be a bit of a son to me and I'll do my best to be a bit of a father to you. How does that sound?

CHARLIE looks over at NATHAN - does he mean it?

NATHAN (CONT'D)

You belong at Shepzoy, Charlie, nowhere else. Don't let anybody tell you different, do you understand?

NATHAN shuts the shotgun, looks up -

CHARLIE is pointing his gun straight at NATHAN's head.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

NATHAN walks to the side but the gun follows him.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Put the gun down.

CHARLIE does not put the gun down. His finger tightens on the trigger.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

CHARLIE  
Standing by the lake. Where he  
drowned.

With that CHARLIE turns and walks off towards home.

NATHAN  
Charlie!

Leaving NATHAN alone, surprisingly rattled by what Charlie  
has just said.

EXT.

SMITH scrambles down into the depression. What could the old  
man have been looking at so intently?

He looks around. Then something about the shape of the mound  
in front of him intrigues him. He starts to pull at the  
foliage...

48

48

CHARLOTTE is helping GWEN, GIDEON and JACK stack the hay in  
the barn.

CHARLOTTE  
I am absolutely exhausted.

GIDEON  
You'll get used to it, ma'am.

49

49

NATHAN and DENNING at a corner table, SIMON behind the bar.  
It's early and very quiet.

DENNING  
I suppose the sun is over the  
yardarm somewhere in the world.

DENNING takes a swallow of beer, knows something is on  
NATHAN's mind.

NATHAN  
Do you believe in ghosts, Denning?

This stops DENNING in his tracks.

DENNING  
Ghosts?

NATHAN

Charlie said... something about  
seeing my son.

DENNING

Charlie wants to get your  
attention, so he says the one thing  
that is guaranteed to do just that.

NATHAN

One night, in the corridor outside  
my bedroom in Shepzoy House, I  
saw... a woman.

DENNING

What sort of woman?

NATHAN

Her clothes were strange. She had a

GWEN pours them mugs of cider which she hands up to them.



The murmur of conversation in the pub, SIMON behind his bar.  
NATHAN and DENNING at a corner table.

NATHAN  
The woman in my house?

DENNING  
A trick of the light.

NATHAN  
Lights in the field?

DENNING  
The brain is an amazing and  
mischievous organ. Who keeps  
telling me that?

NATHAN  
I know, I know.

DENNING  
Anyway, I thought you were meant to  
be a scientist.

NATHAN  
So did I.

They touch mugs, down their drinks.

DENNING  
Simon! Chaps dying of thirst over  
here.

The door crashes open and JACK is standing there, so out of  
breath he can barely speak.

NATHAN  
Jack? What on earth's the matter?

JACK  
Mrs Appleby, sir!

SMITH and his COLLEAGUES have descended into the depression  
via a ladder.

\*

\*

\*

53

53

AGNES finishes her lonely meal, then walks next door to check on her CHILDREN.

BATHSHEBA and the GIRLS are asleep.

But CHARLIE lies on his truckle bed, his cheeks wet with tears.

AGNES  
Charlie?

AGNES sits on the bed next to him.

AGNES (CONT'D)  
What can be so bad, my brave man?

A beat.

CHARLIE  
Are you my mother?

AGNES  
(Shocked)  
What? Of course I am, what a thing  
to say!

CHARLIE  
They said I didn't belong to you or  
the village.

AGNES  
Who said that? These wretched Boys?

CHARLIE nods.

AGNES (CONT'D)  
Then they are liars! Vile, nasty,  
spiteful little liars! I am your  
mother and this is where you  
belong.

CHARLIE puts his arms around AGNES, holds her tight, very  
raw.

AGNES holds him tight, fierce with love for him.

54

54 \*

NATHAN runs into his house, where a concerned GIDEON and GWEN  
are waiting for him.

NATHAN  
Where is she?

GWEN  
In your study, sir.

NATHAN hurries into the house -

55

55

- and walks quickly to the study.

CHARLOTTE turns at the sound of the door opening and throws herself into his arms.

NATHAN  
Are you hurt?

CHARLOTTE shakes her head.

CHARLOTTE  
I'm fine.

NATHAN holds her at arm's length, studies her face -

NATHAN  
You promise me?  
(Firm)  
Where is he?

CHARLOTTE  
He didn't hurt me, Nathan -

NATHAN  
Which does not mean I will not hurt  
him. Where is he?

CHARLOTTE  
He is a very old and very confused  
man.

CHARLOTTE nods towards the solar.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)  
Please, Nathan. For me.

56

56

NATHAN lets himself into the solar, closes the door behind him.

There is the OLD MAN, slumped in a chair, physically and emotionally exhausted.

NATHAN  
My name is Nathan Appleby and I am  
the master of Shepzoy House. Who  
the hell are you, sir?

The OLD MAN (EBENEZER) raises his weary head, but looks at NATHAN with something close to contempt.

EBENEZER  
My name is Ebenezer Alsop.

NATHAN  
What are you doing here?

EBENEZER  
What are you doing here? They've started again, after all these years.

NATHAN  
What has started again? You are making -

EBENEZER  
The voices.

NATHAN  
If you want my help, sir, ask for it. Do not threaten my wife.

EBENEZER  
Your help? What help can an Appleby ever give me?

NATHAN  
(Impatient)  
You are testing my patience.

EBENEZER  
When I was a boy I worked the Appleby mine.

NATHAN  
There is no Appleby mine.

EBENEZER  
They used us boys from the workhouse in Taunton, never the village lads. Don't risk the village lads, no sir.

A beat as EBENEZER calms himself. Remembers.

Without even thinking, NATHAN reaches for his notebook.

EBENEZER (CONT'D)  
'Twas a terrible place, hot as Hell and black as the Devil. Every hour on the hour we would call out to each other, to let us know we were all safe. David... Harrington...

57

57

CHARLIE is awake instantly, his nerves on edge.

He stares at the shutters, knows what is coming next...

David... Harrington... Abraham... **Henry**... Benjamin...  
Ebenezer.....

CHARLIE  
Not tonight. I don't want to play

He turns his head - next to the bed, between the bed and the window, are some of Nathan's TOY SOLDIERS. \*

CHARLIE slides out from under the bed, stands up. \*

Now he can see that the TOY SOLDIERS are neatly arranged,  
weighing down the lock of hair and the letter.

\*  
\*

The sound of CHILDREN GENTLY LAUGHING outside.

CHARLIE picks it up the letter.

\*

60

60

The effort is starting to diminish EBENEZER's remaining  
stores of life but NATHAN is insistent, pushing him on.

EBENEZER

That last day... I couldn't stand  
it any more. The darkness. The  
terrible weight of it on my eyes...  
I was nine years old, sir! I had no  
mother and father of my own!

es

NATHAN

Just tell me what happened.

EBENEZER

I climbed up to the surface, to the  
sunlight, even though I knew I  
would be beaten. Then I heard the  
whole valley rumble. The mine was  
caving in!

61

61

The door to the cottage is wide open.

On the horizon, CHARLIE walks away from the cottage.

62

62

EBENEZER stares out of the window.

EBENEZER

If there was a landslip, men on the  
surface would shout down to the  
trapper, who'd sound the alarm  
but... But I wasn't in the  
coffin... so the boys never got  
their warning.

A beat as he remembers.



EBENEZER (CONT' D)

I ran to the office and alerted the overseers. Old man Appleby was there -

NATHAN Looks up from his notes.

NATHAN

My great grandfather?

EBENEZER

NATHAN  
He's down there.

SMITH  
The tunnels were built for small children, in places they will be barely three feet wide.

CHARLOTTE  
Listen to him, Nathan.

SMITH  
If you do get through there will be little or no oxygen. It's madness.

People part as DENNING appears, also with a rucksack and bottle of water, MARY and HARRIET hurrying after him.

NATHAN  
What are you doing?

DENNING  
Coming with you. Charlie is my responsibility as much as yours.

NATHAN nods, pleased with the company.

CHARLOTTE  
If you're not back soon I'm coming in after you.

He turns to CHARLOTTE, touches her cheek, kisses her on the lips.

MARY  
(To Denning) \*  
You are a foolish, foolish man.

But MARY embraces her husband.

NATHAN and DENNING walk towards the top of the ladder and start to climb down. \*  
\*

NATHAN catches AGNES' eye -

AGNES \*  
You'll find my boy, sir, I know you will. \*

NATHAN and DENNING disappear from sight. \*

GIDEON  
"And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up..."

The door from the solar to the outside is open.

Ebenezer is gone.

65

65

NATHAN and DENNING crawl through the cave, their lamps barely touching the darkness.

66

66 \*

CHARLOTTE is not used to just waiting and it doesn't suit her.

CHARLOTTE

Mr Smith, I want you to shore this entrance up.

SMITH

Mrs Appleby.

SMITH nods to his ASSISTANTS and they start to organise themselves.

CHARLOTTE

Gideon, take some of the men and help them. Gwen, go up to the house and get food and drink.

GWEN

Yes, ma'am.

CHARLOTTE

(To Jack)

Lamps. All the lamps we have.

67

67

NATHAN and DENNING struggle deeper and deeper into the labyrinth.

DENNING in particular is really struggling, lungs screaming in the thin air.

The sound of DENNING gagging makes NATHAN turn.

DENNING

The air's so thin.

NATHAN

Go back, Matthew.

DENNING

No.

NATHAN hears - does he? - the sound of a CHILD'S LAUGHTER, holds his lamp up.

NATHAN  
Did you hear that? A child  
laughing.

DENNING shakes his head -

DENNING  
I can just hear the sound of my own  
blood pounding in my ears.

NATHAN  
(Shouting)  
Charlie! Charlie!

NATHAN waits but there is no reply. Just the silence of the  
earth.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
We must push on. Can you do it?

DENNING nods, brave. The two men push on deeper into the  
tunnel.

68

68

People sit quietly, barely talking, eating the food that GWEN  
has served up.

An edgy CHARLOTTE sits on a grassy bank with AGNES.

AGNES  
What was I to do, ma'am, leave my  
own sister's boy in the workhouse?  
And I loved him. Right from the  
start, I loved that boy as if he  
were my own.

69

69

NATHAN and DENNING drag themselves through the tunnel, their  
lungs and muscles screaming.

Suddenly the roof of the tunnel has gone and NATHAN can stand  
up.

NATHAN  
It opens up!

DENNING  
Thank God.

NATHAN reaches down and pulls his friend through.

NATHAN  
The surveying must have disturbed  
the old tunnels.

NATHAN and - especially - DENNING are in physical trouble  
now, struggling to breathe, dizzy, headaches ...

DENNING  
Wait, Applaby, wait.

DENNING hunkers onto his knees, coughing.

They notice that the flames in their lamps are getting  
smaller and smaller until they are barely still alight -

NATHAN  
We can't stay here.

DENNING  
Just let me catch my breath -

NATHAN  
There is no breath to catch, we  
have to move on!

NATHAN drags DENNING to his feet.

The two men stumble on into the darkness.

70

70

GWEN sits next to the agitated CHARLOTTE, tries to take her  
mind off the wait.

GWEN  
What was he like, ma'am, when you  
first met Mr Applaby?

CHARLOTTE  
He was this dashing young man,  
running around London, devoted to  
his patients, full of new and  
radical ideas. Lectures and  
parties. Then, when I got him to  
stop running around for a moment, I  
saw something else... a sadness.

GWEN  
Gabriel?

CHARLOTTE  
I promised myself that I would love  
that sadness out of him.  
(MORE)





EBENEZER walks high up on the land, Somerset spread out below him.

He is very weary of his death.

DENNING lowers his head -

DENNING (CONT'D)

*I am the resurrection and the life,  
saith the Lord: he that believeth  
in me, though he were dead, yet  
shall he live: and whosoever liveth  
and believeth in me shall never  
die.*

NATHAN hears a noise, spins around, hold up his lamp.

Nobody there.

DENNING (CONT'D)

*I know that my Redeemer liveth, and  
that he shall stand at the latter  
day upon the earth. And though  
after my skin worms destroy this  
body, yet in my flesh -*

NATHAN walks further into the dark "room", his weak flame struggling to illuminate the darkness.

NATHAN sees - thinks he sees - a boy pass down a tunnel.

NATHAN

Charlie?!

NATHAN hurries off down the tunnel.

DENNING

(After him)

Appleby! What are you doing?!

But NATHAN doesn't even hear Denning, he's determined to rescue Charlie.

The caves are pitch dark, confusing, his lamp barely making an impression.

*David... Harrington... Abraham... Henry... Benjamin...  
Ebenezer...*

NATHAN

Charlie!

Nothing.

Then, to his left, again that indistinct blur of red.

NATHAN gives chase again, doing his best to keep his feet in this dark, dangerous place.

He stands at a junction of tunnels, not sure which way to go, panting hard.

Then a flash of red leads him into one of the natural tunnels, almost seeming to lead him on.

NATHAN falls over something and goes sprawling, his lamp going out.

Complete darkness.

NATHAN finds his matches, lights his lamp and a weak orange flame flickers feebly.

*David... Harrington... Abraham...*

NATHAN sweeps the darkness with his lamp... *Henry...*  
*Benjamin... Ebenezer...*

There, scrunched in a tiny coffin-shaped space in the wall of the tunnel -

... CHARLIE...

NATHAN touches CHARLIE's cheek.

It is clear that CHARLIE has been dead for some time and the sheer power of his failure rocks NATHAN to the core.

NATHAN gently lifts CHARLIE out of the coffin, closes CHARLIE's eyes. Sits on the dirty ground and holds the dead boy to his chest.

DENNING staggers into view, takes in the crying NATHAN and the dead boy in his arms.

Then, from far off in the labyrinth, a rumble.

DENNING  
We have to get out! Now!

NATHAN stands, holding CHARLIE's limp body in his arms.

DENNING holds up the lamp, spins around -

DENNING (CONT'D)  
Which way?

NATHAN shakes his head, has no idea, for once his energy dissipated by the shock of CHARLIE's death.

Another rumble, closer now.

DENNING (CONT'D)  
We are going to die.

DENNING is close to giving up, to letting go.

Then NATHAN hears something. A small boy's voice -

GABRIEL  
(Out Of Vision)  
Daddy. Daddy.

NATHAN  
Gabriel?

NATHAN walks forward with his light, towards the sound of the voice.

75

75

CHARLOTTE is at the foot of the ladder, peering into the darkness of the tunnel. She glances at her timepiece.

\*

CHARLOTTE  
Nathan!

Nothing.

HARRIET waits with MARY, AGNES with BATHSHEBA and the other SIBLINGS - all looking down into the depression.

\*

The earth trembles, more dirt falling in the tunnel entrance.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)  
That is not the earth settling!

\*

GWEN  
Please, ma'am. Wait up here with us.

\*

\*

\*

CHARLOTTE

Listen!

A rumble grows louder, louder and closer.

SMITH

Landslip! Get out! Now!

But CHARLOTTE will not leave -

CHARLOTTE

Nathan!

SMITH

Mrs Appleby! Now!

There is a terrible noise from within the darkness of the cave as somewhere the earth crashes into a vacuum.

A cloud of dirt and dust plumes out of the hole.

GWEN

Ma'am!

GWEN tries to get down to her mistress but SMITH prevents her.

CHARLOTTE's heart stills -

And then she sees them! It's NATHAN and DENNING, covered in dirt, staggering out of the cave.

She is full of joy and relief, only to see that NATHAN has the dead CHARLIE in his arms.

NATHAN looks up, sees AGNES looking down at him. She drops to her knees in grief and shock, keening.

BATHSHEBA and her SISTERS just stare at their dead brother.

It is a dreadful scene and one that NATHAN will never forget.

76

76

EBENEZER lies on the turf, his cheek against the land.  
His eyes are open. But EBENEZER ALSOP is dead.

77

77

SMITH, GIDEON, JACK and other WORKERS barricade the entrance  
to the mine, covering it up forever.  
GIDEON crosses himself.

78

78

Our house, quiet on a still night.  
A light on in an upstairs window.

79

79

NATHAN lies in bed, wide awake.  
A sleepy CHARLOTTE kisses her husband, concerned.

NATHAN

I let him down. He trusted me and I  
let him down.

CHARLOTTE

Shhh, now. It was an accident.

NATHAN

Every sleeping moment of my life -  
and most of the waking ones - I  
dreamt of him. Waiting for me by  
the lake, launching his boat -

CHARLOTTE

Nathan, Nathan -

NATHAN

Then frightened, shouting out for  
me, the cold water in his lungs -

CHARLOTTE

Do not torture yourself.

NATHAN

And now I have failed Charlie, too.

CHARLOTTE

You have nothing to reproach  
yourself for. Nothing.

NATHAN  
I refused to believe what he was  
telling me.

CHARLOTTE  
That there are ghosts?

NATHAN turns and looks at his wife -

NATHAN  
I heard Gabriel's voice. I'm sure  
of it.

CHARLOTTE  
You said yourself you were short of  
oxygen - seeing things, hearing  
things.

But she can see that NATHAN is unconvinced.

CHARLOTTE is desperate to drag him away from the memories of  
that dark place.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)  
There are no ghosts. There is just  
you and me.

NATHAN hears the hurt in her voice, touches her cheek.

CHARLOTTE rolls on top of him, her hair cascading over his  
face.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)  
And we are alive, Nathan Appleby.  
We are alive.

NATHAN reaches for her, his mouth hungry for hers, grief  
sparkling to lust between them.

He pushes CHARLOTTE back on the bed and she opens for him,  
wanting him, needing him...

80

80

The landscape is empty, eerie.

Charlotte's handkerchief flaps in the summer breeze.

An OWL screeches.