

This Beautiful Fantastic

Screenplay
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1 EXT. THE ORPHANAGE OF ST. FIDELMA'S - DAY

1

A violent gale that hints at a hurricane rips through the winter trees in the exposed courtyard of a Gothic orphanage. It is threatening to topple over the line of seven-year-olds making their way to chapel, desperately trying to keep their formation. Capes and hair fly in all directions. In the visual melee, one particularly pretty young GIRL stands out. Although terrified, she is bent over pulling up a white sock that has fallen down her shin. Her hair is scraped back to her scalp, not one is out of place. An airborne nun passes her by with a muffled scream. She checks the buttons on her cape and walks at double time to the chapel as her classmates attempt to stay upright and fall like ten pins around her.

She reaches sanctuary, the last one standing. She goes inside and shuts the huge door behind her.

V.O.

Bella Brown. She's been a guest at St. Fidelma's for seven years now, one of so many left all alone in this city. It is, I believe, a miracle that she is alive after her arrival in this world ...

2 EXT. HYDE PARK, SEVEN YEARS AGO - DAY

2

On a freezing winter morning, Baby Bella lies in a Moses basket. She peers out from a living blanket of quacking ducks. She is unnaturally quiet, taking in her surroundings with big inquisitive eyes.

V.O.

They say she would have perished for sure had it not been for the ducks taking a liking to her.

Bella's view of a cold winter sky is suddenly obscured by an OCTOGENARIAN MAN (in vibrant swimming trunks and cap) leaning over her. There is ice on his goggles and the tips of his moustache. Steam rises from his warm body.

V.O. (CONT'D)

Sat on her like an egg they did, until she was discovered by one of those lunatics who take to the icy waters for 'medicinal fortitude'.

The man picks up the basket and peers at Bella. She peers back at him.

3 INT. ORPHANAGE DORMITORY - NIGHT

3

Bella, now 7 years old, lies awake in her bed in the middle of the night. All the other girls sleep soundly but Bella has the sheets pulled up under her nose. Her eyes dart around, terrified. Outside, a storm blows and silhouettes of branches move across the wall.

4 EXT. HYDE PARK, SEVEN YEARS AGO - DAY

4

We see Baby Bella, as the Octogenarian swimmer sets the Moses basket onto his old bicycle.

V.O.

Oh, she's a strange one. Scared senseless of flora and fauna she is. Can't figure why.

As he cycles away, Bella is jiggled uncomfortably, and her point of view is filled with dark, jagged branches. She bursts into tears.

5 INT. ORPHANAGE CHAPEL - DAY

5

As the priest gives the eulogy, the congregation of girls look on. At the back of the church Bella is lining up prayer books in perfect piles and making perfectly symmetrical rows of unevenly burnt candles.

V.O.

It's her preoccupation with order that concerns me. But reordering the candles in chapel. Well, it's not only dangerous, it's unholy!

5A INT. ART ROOM, ORPHANAGE - DAY

5A

All the other girls are sewing colorful rag dolls together.

V.O.

She has talents, of course, but nothing useful.

Bella puts the finishing touches to a miniature ship in a bottle - she raises the four masts perfectly. As she pops in the cork, a nun snatches the bottle and throws it in the bin.

6-7 OMITTED

6-7

8 INT. CANTEEN, ORPHANAGE - DAY

8

The noisy canteen is filled with girls clattering cutlery as they eat.

Alone at the end of a table, Bella divides her grey liver, potatoes and onions into a symmetrical pattern. She checks the wall clock, and when the hands click to 1 o'clock exactly, she lifts her cutlery.

V.O.

I fervently believe she has been sent to test our faith by none other than the Good Lord Himself.

8A INT. ORPHANAGE DORMITORY - NIGHT

8A

We see the glow of a torch under Bella's sheets in an otherwise pitch black dormitory. She's reading.

V.O.

Her world is solitary, insular, just
Bella and her books. What she does with
the knowledge is beyond me.

A Nun pulls back the sheet, but Bella is unfazed.

9 INT. ORPHANAGE CLASSROOM - DAY

9

A broom is thrust into Bella's hand. She looks at the dishevelled classroom that she's been told to clean.

V.O.

Punishments don't bother her...like water
off a duck's back.

Bella is busy, on hands and knees, lining up all the desks in perfect lines. Everything just so.

She sees a large pile of coloured chalk, starts to draw on the blackboard; far from being juvenile doodles, her strokes are expertly draftsman-like in their precision and the result is impressive beyond her years.

Bella stands back to look at her work. When she hears footsteps in the corridor, she quickly wipes the board perfectly clean.

10 INT. ORPHANAGE OFFICE - DAY

10

MOTHER SUPERIOR sits behind her desk, watched over by the Virgin Mary. Opposite sits DR. O'HEARNE a kindly looking man in his sixties with a bright red nose and a bad cold.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

A top up, Fergus?

It's the same voice we've been listening to. Mother Superior reaches into a drawer and retrieves a bottle of whiskey.

DOCTOR O'HEARNE

(coughs)

Well that will anaesthetize the old
sinuses, Gordinia, that's for sure.

The Doctor jerks in a strange way, and we hear the creak of old furniture. Mother Superior stands to see that Bella is on all fours pushing the doctor's chair with all her might to align the feet with the patterns on the carpet. The Doctor looks down at Bella, but she seems unaware of his presence. The doctor smiles warmly.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Bella! You see what I mean, Doctor?

She scowls at Bella, and Bella goes and sits at the back of the room. Mother Superior pours industrial slugs of whiskey.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT'D)

We found her last Tuesday, four o'clock in the morning it was, rearranging the beds in the dormitory...

(takes a sip)

... with the girls asleep in them.

DOCTOR O'HEARNE

Is that right, Bella?

Bella looks at him as if she's just noticed his presence. He takes a large gulp and coughs again.

Mother Superior looks round at Bella who is now scanning about the room. Bella spots a messy bookshelf - some books are spine out, others lie on their sides.

DOCTOR O'HEARNE (CONT'D)

She has, if you like, created her own imaginary world - her rules, she's the boss. This behaviour is clearly brought on by her abandonment as a tot.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

All my girls are without parents, Doctor. It's a fundamental requirement of their being here.

DOCTOR O'HEARNE

I'll wager that not many of them spent their first few days being mothered by ducks.

Mother Superior accepts this with a tiny nod. Behind her, Bella has begun to tidy the books, arranging them in perfect order from the tallest to the shortest.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

We just want her to put her head down, blend in. All our girls know not to aim above their abilities - that way lies failure and disappointment.

The Doctor hardly approves of her approach to character building, but doesn't argue. He takes another generous sip.

DOCTOR O'HEARNE

You know, I can feel this working already.

Mother Superior smiles an ever so slightly glazed smile.

DOCTOR O'HEARNE (CONT'D)
 Bella's experiences have left her, let's
 just say, a little mistrusting of others.

Dr. O'Hearne watches Bella, sips his whiskey.

DOCTOR O'HEARNE (CONT'D)
 But you've nothing to worry about Mother
 Superior.
 (less convincingly)
 Bella will find her place in the world
 ... God willing.

Bella picks up a dusty brown leather book, and slides it into
 place on the shelf. As she lifts another, we realize we are:

11 INT. LIBRARY - DAY

11

And Bella is TWENTY YEARS OLDER, organizing books on the
 shelves. She is dwarfed by the sheer scale of the huge,
 ancient, gothic public library - it is handsome and
 foreboding in equal measure.

We find Bella perched on a ladder in CLASSICAL POETRY. She
 lifts OVID'S METAMORPHOSES. She turns pages quickly,
 feverishly. She pauses, lost in the moment. We hear someone
 clearing their throat and Bella turns to see MISS BRAMBLE,
 the head librarian, a severe sixty year-old spinster with
 narrow eyes seated behind heavy frames. She is holding up a
 small peg-board sign - "*You Work. Members Read*". Bella
 quickly slaps the book shut, puffing a wee cloud of dust into
 the air.

12 OMITTED

12

13 OMITTED

13

14 INT. LIBRARY - AFTERNOON

14

Bella is dusting bookshelves. Through the crackly tannoy, we
 hear Bramble's barely passive and very aggressive voice.

BRAMBLE (O.C.)
 The library will close in three minutes,
 exactly. Please return all books whence
 they came...

Bramble is stooped over the ancient microphone, surveying all
 from within her soundproof glass office.

BRAMBLE (CONT'D)
 ... and make your way to the exit,
 immediately.
 (an afterthought with a curled
 lip)
 'Thank you'.

A few patrons hurriedly pack up, fearful of the wrath of Bramble.

15 INT. BELLA'S FLAT - AFTERNOON

15

Bella lives in the basement flat of an old house on a pretty residential city street.

She enters, sets her umbrella into an antiquated elephant-foot brolley-stand. She locks all the locks and checks the door a few times for good measure.

She empties her pockets, stacks everything neatly away.

Perfect columns of coins stand neatly on a shelf, with a slight kink in one pile of pennies. She adds three coins and sets it right. She glances at the clock, 5.59.

Almost every inch of wall space is covered with heaving bookshelves, and the decor is peppered with ducks, from paintings to light fittings.

Intricate model ships encased in bottles are dotted on shelves and windowsills around the room.

We see a perfectly manicured Bonsai tree which sits safe from the world under a heavy glass bell jar. She stops to examine and prune it, the bell jar magnifying her eye.

She seems caged, locked away from nature and the outside world.

16 INT. BELLA'S KITCHEN - EVENING

16

Bella opens a cupboard to reveal meticulously stacked tins of food, arranged by colour.

Bella plugs in and turns on the TV. She flicks the dial past several snowy channels, until she finds a soap opera, but it is in Welsh (it's the only channel Bella can get in the basement and the extra large aerial on the antique set struggles to make the connection).

She waits until exactly 6.30 before touching her compartmentalized TV dinner. As Bella eats, the Welsh-speaking NEWS READER welcomes the viewers. Bella repeats his phrases perfectly.

17 INT. BELLA'S BEDROOM - EVENING

17

Bella sketches. She studies the finished result and scrunches it up and throws it towards the bin, but it misses. She tries to resume drawing, but the crumpled paper sitting on the floor tortures her until she gets up and tidies it away.

18 INT. BELLA'S BATHROOM - LATER 18

Bella sits reading in the bath, in a bathroom full of rubber ducks, holding her knees to her chest. An egg timer PINGS. As she pulls the plug-chain, the pipes emit a bubbly belch.

19 INT. BELLA'S BEDROOM - LATER 19

Bella pulls her immaculate foldaway bed from the wall.

CUT TO:

Bella is cocooned under her emerald duck-down cover. She reads from a mountainous pile by the bed. PROUST. The egg timer PINGS. Book's closed. Lights out.

CUT TO:

20 INT. BELLA'S BEDROOM - DAWN 20

A slice of light through the heavy curtains slashes the dust in the air. Bella stares at her alarm clock as 6:59 becomes 7 o'clock exactly - the alarm QUACKS.

She swings her feet into her soft duck slippers.

21 INT. BELLA'S BATHROOM - MORNING 21

Bella selects the third of seven toothbrushes (differently coloured) and lays a perfect pea-sized amount of paste on it.

22 INT. BELLA'S BEDROOM - MORNING 22

Bella opens her wardrobe. All the clothes are black and grey and almost identical, seeming to hail from Victorian times. She selects her Wednesday outfit.

23 OMITTED 23

24 INT. BELLA'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING 24

In front of Welsh Breakfast TV now, she glances at the clock and doesn't lift the spoon until 7.30. She begins eating her breakfast of tinned fruit, tinned rice pudding and a carton of orange juice.

25 INT. BELLA'S FLAT - MORNING 25

As she leaves, Bella unplugs every appliance in the house. She moves in front of an old mirror and takes a deep breath. She stands for an eternity, scrutinising herself.

BELLA

Today I am going to make a difference...
(then utterly unconvincingly)
... today I am really going to make a
difference.

26 EXT. BELLA'S FLAT - MORNING

26

Bella shuts the front door and joins us in the real world just as a gust of wind sets an empty hanging basket swinging and causes Bella to grab her hat. She double locks the door with a large bunch of keys from her bag and then treble locks it for good measure. Checks the door, moves away, checks, moves away, checks, moves away, checks.

As she passes a rather grand house next door, her behaviour does not go unnoticed by THE CURTAIN TWITCHER.

27 INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

27

We see the silhouette of The Curtain Twitcher as he peers out. The shipping forecast plays on the radio.

RADIO ANNOUNCER
Cromarty. Gale warning. Northwesterly
gale force 8, gusting nine, expected
later.

28 EXT. STREET - MORNING

28

Bella gets to the bus stop just as the bus is leaving and she shows her frustration by doing a dance somewhat like a person being stung by a swarm of bees. She looks at her watch.

29 OMITTED

29

30 OMITTED

30

28A EXT. LIBRARY - DAY

28A

Bella frantically takes off her coat as she runs up the steps, checking her watch.

31 INT. LIBRARY - DAY

31

An ELDERLY MAN stands at the enquiry desk staring ahead. He's watching Bramble yell at Bella in the soundproof glass office. The man tries to get Bramble's attention. Having done so we see Bramble hold up a sign "ONE MOMENT PLEASE". She immediately goes back to her attack on Bella.

MISS BRAMBLE
You're paid to provide salient
information and promote an air of order,
whilst maintaining silence at all times.
On your allocated days, you are obliged
to be here by 9 o'clock precisely, and
work until 4.30 with an hour for lunch
and two breaks for tea. I shall be
watching you closely for the slightest
deviation from this schedule. Have I made
myself perfectly clear?

Bella nods.

MISS BRAMBLE (CONT'D)

I would be grateful if you would synchronize your watch with the library clock. Unlike you, it hasn't missed a minute in all my thirty seven years here. You shall spend the morning attending to Oceanography, A through to J, which is frankly all at sea. Now, I must go and attend to Mr. Godfrey, who, no doubt, is going to ask me once again if "The Art Of Veneer" by Mark Thrussington has arrived.

She looks to Mr. Godfrey.

MISS BRAMBLE (CONT'D)

One must be guarded when widening one's horizons not to let standards slip.

She exits and attends to Mr. Godfrey.

MISS BRAMBLE (CONT'D)

Mr. Godfrey, we are 3 days away from the arrival of Mr. Thrussington's tome. In the meantime, may I remind you that you are a week overdue with
(thumbing through an ancient card collection)
"The Bedroom Furniture of The Palais De Versailles" and ...
(a raised brow)
"Inside the Mind of the Marquis de Sade".

Mr. Godfrey seems utterly alone and desperately ill-equipped to deal with the full gaze of Bramble.

MISS BRAMBLE (CONT'D)

Will there be anything else, Mr. Godfrey?

Bella passes by. Mr. Godfrey smiles at her. Bella awkwardly smiles back. Mr. Godfrey disappears into the shadows. Bramble's jealousy and anger palpable, she slides a ginger snap into her mouth...CRUNCH.

32 OMITTED

32

33 INT. LIBRARY - LATER

33

Bella is filing. A twenty-something man, BILLY TRANTER bumbles through the library door. He seems otherworldly and has an eccentric disregard for modern fashion. He absentmindedly carries a mish-mash of cardboard tubes, a Tupperware box and an ancient tartan THERMOS. He spies Bella.

BILLY

(loudly and with enthusiasm)
Hello!

Bella is mortified, nods ever so slightly in his direction and turns straight back to filing. Bramble is manning the front desk - she wipes custard cream crumbs from her lips as Hurricane Billy heads toward her. She is ready for him.

BILLY (CONT'D)
(foghorn loud)
Good morning. I'm looking for the...

Bramble holds up a "Quiet Please AT ALL TIMES" sign. Billy is taken aback and falls silent.

MISS BRAMBLE
(a low professional whisper)
Good day, sir. This is a library. How may we be of assistance?

BILLY
Well, good day, 'madam'.

He scratches his head, just standing there in a daze as though he's forgotten who he is. Bella watches from the corner of her eye.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Tuesday, no, Monday, library,
construction, damn...

After a moment a triumphant smile covers his face.

BILLY (CONT'D)
(Loudly again)
Leonardo di ser Piero da Vinci 1452-1519!
Erm, sketches and the like, if you would
be so kind.

MISS BRAMBLE
Leonardo Da Vinci, Civil Engineering,
brackets European History of - far wall,
bottom left. Are you a member?

BILLY
Wonderful, thanks! No, not going to take
them anywhere. I'd only lose them and
where would that get us?

Miss Bramble lifts a weighty book from under the counter. "LIBRARY RULES" is embossed on its cover and it's chained to the desk.

MISS BRAMBLE
Can I remind you that there's no eating
or drinking in the library and we expect
absolute silence at all times? Absolute.

BILLY
Of course you can. Absolutely.

Billy collects his stuff and goes to move off but catches Bella's eye as she wheels a book cart across the room. He smiles at her in passing which causes Bella to go scarlet once again. Her trolley pushing goes up a gear, causing a SQUEAK in the antique wheels.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Thanks!

Bramble holds up a "Quiet!" sign to Bella whilst addressing Billy.

BRAMBLE

Shhhhhhh!

BILLY

Oops! Sorry. Didn't mean to .../

MISS BRAMBLE

SSSSSHHHHHHH!

Billy just raises his thumb to her. She grimaces.

34 INT. LIBRARY - LATER

34

Billy is sketching furiously from a book. He mumbles to himself as he scribbles long and intense calculations, stopping only to drink thick black coffee from his Thermos.

Bella does her rounds with the book cart. She ends up in an aisle where she can see Billy through the shelves.

Bella slowly puts back some books and can't help looking at him. She moves to where she can see over his shoulder. He seems to be able to draw his sketches to exact scale, marrying science and crude art. Bella's eyes flicker with excitement.

He sips from his Thermos and lifts a shelled boiled egg. He sprinkles some salt onto it and takes a bite. Bramble spies him from the glass office - she taps the glass, and the "No Eating" sign goes up. Billy raises the thumb of understanding. He goes to put it away but as she turns her back he surreptitiously pops a whole egg into his mouth. Behind the bookshelves Bella smiles the faintest of smiles. He munches behind Da Vinci as Bramble cranes her neck to watch him.

35 INT. LIBRARY - LATER

35

Bella watches as Billy leaves. Bella then looks through the books that Billy read, one eye on the ever-lurking Miss Bramble. She stares in wonder at Da Vinci's sketches. As she flicks, a seemingly blank piece of paper falls out and floats to the ground. She picks it up and holds it up to the light. She hurriedly slides it back into the book and pockets it.

36 INT. BELLA'S FLAT - NIGHT

36

The Da Vinci book lies open. Bella is looking at the piece of paper that she rescued from the library. She holds it under the angle-poise light and then very carefully sprinkles pencil lead onto it. She rubs the lead into the marks on the paper and holds it under the light again. We see the ghost image of an amazing technical illustration of a sort of mechanical bird. A rogue gust of wind blows open the window and whips the page from Bella's desk and blows it through her flat. As she chases it, the wind whips it up and out a skylight window above the curtained french doors. Bella freezes, then bravely gathers the courage to open the heavy curtains. She looks out - the wildly tangled and unkempt garden looks terrifying. Bella tries to juggle her obvious desire to get the memento with her horror of horticulture. She stands by the doors, deep breathing, almost hyperventilating. She gingerly attempts to open the door. It doesn't budge. It's never been opened. Through the glass she surveys her nemesis - *THE GARDEN*. She can see the paper lit by the moonlight, impaled on a distant tree branch. She is frozen with fear.

37 EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN - MOMENTS LATER

37

Illuminated by the fullest of moons, paint cracks as the handle moves and the door creaks open. Bella tip-toes through the garden wearing plaid tea towels tied over her feet, kitchen gloves, an old mac and a Russian hat -it looks like a rudimentary biological warfare outfit. All we can hear is her breathing as she flicks on an ancient bicycle lamp.

38 INT. NEXT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

38

From a window at the back of the Curtain Twitcher's house, we watch Bella as she makes her way at a snail's pace towards the gnarled old tree at the back of the garden.

39 EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

39

Bella can see the paper stuck to a razor sharp branch high up. Strange sounds shake her to the bones. As she reaches the tree, the safety of the house lights fades into the distance.

She clumsily climbs onto a rusty old water butt. She reaches out to grab the precious paper as it flaps around just out of her reach. In the moment of grasping it, she gashes her hand on a sharp branch.

As she yelps in pain Bella is suddenly bathed in torchlight and her utterances are drowned out by a booming voice.

ALFIE (O.S.)
A-HA! I've got you!

Bella swings round, loses her balance, and falls flailing through the air.

FADE TO BLACK.

40 INT. ALFIE'S HOUSE - LATER

40

Bella comes to with her face being gently slapped by MILLY, a starchily-uniformed nurse in her fifties and drunk, or rather pickled.

ALFIE (O.S.)
Ah, looky here, it's our very own
horticultural terrorist.

Bella doesn't know where she is.

ALFIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I want a word with you, you ecological
insurgent.

Milly admonishes Alfie with a drunken mumble. For the first time we see ALFIE STEPHENSON (the curtain twitcher), mid-sixties and an imposing figure of fine stock dressed in a velvet smoking jacket and tassled skullcap.

ALFIE (CONT'D)
Leave her alone? Have you seen what she's
done? It is nothing short of wanton
criminal neglect!

Bella is propped up on a plush but worn chaise longue in Alfie's home.

BELLA
How did I get here? What happened?

Milly smiles at Bella and breathes booze on her which makes Bella cough.

ALFIE
Your garden fought back, that's what.

Bella struggles to regain her bearings. The dimly lit decor has an understated beauty and elegance. She checks her hand - it is still clutching the treasured sheet of paper. Milly dresses the cut on Bella's hand.

MILLY
You'll survive. No harm done.

ALFIE
No harm done? I'd say harm has had an
absolute bloody field day.

Alfie's breath is shallow. He coughs into a colorful handkerchief.

Milly goes over and hands Alfie two pink pills, which he takes without thinking. She then goes back to tend to Bella.

ALFIE (CONT'D)
Leave her! She can fend for herself!

Bella's still a bit groggy.

MILLY
(to Bella)
Come on dear, tea's on it's way.

Bella's discomfort grows. A huge kettle begins to whistle on the cooker.

BELLA
Thank you. I'm fine. I need to go.

Bella tries to get to her feet, but she is unsteady. Alfie re-directs his rage, shouting towards the door.

ALFIE
WHERE'S THE DAMN TEA, VERNON.
(To Bella)
So, young lady, what is it that you do when you're not murdering plants?

Milly slips a thermometer under Bella's tongue, making speech a little tricky.

BELLA
I worr in rhe ribrary... firing mostry...
buh I'm rearry a wrirer.

ALFIE
Anything that keeps you out of the garden!

BELLA
I'm thorry for rhe inconvenienth.

ALFIE
The inconvenience? How about, I'm sorry for the unmitigated eco apocalypse I've created?
(to the doorway)
VERNON! TEA!

Milly pulls the thermometer from Bella's mouth, then gets some more pills and a glass of water. Alfie swallows the handful of brightly coloured medication.

ALFIE (CONT'D)
(to Bella)
You happy - making me ill?

Two tears trickle down Bella's cheeks. Milly rolls her eyes and takes a large swig of booze.

ALFIE (CONT'D)
 VERNON, WHERE THE HELL... ?

VERNON
 Alright, alright keep your hair on.

VERNON, Alfie's cleaner and cook, arrives. He is in his mid thirties, with a Welsh accent. He is wearing his overcoat, about to leave.

He hurriedly makes the tea and passes round some delicious looking homemade cookies. Bella looks at them nervously.

VERNON (CONT'D)
 Go on, they won't bite.

Bella takes one of Vernon's cookie and takes a tiny bite.

BELLA
 (To Vernon, whispering)
 Delicious.

VERNON
 Thank you, darling. A good chocolate chip cookie depends on just the right amount of chips. Got to be 85% cocoa. And oat bran, so they're not too bad for his Lordship's ticker.

ALFIE
 You've been wearing that apron too long, Vernon.

Vernon scowls.

VERNON
 (to Bella)
 I'm used to this. Numbed by his vitriol. If he wasn't a sick old codger, I'd not let him get away with it.
 (to Alfie)
 If you ever talk to me like that again, Alfie, I swear to God I'll quit. Is that clear?

Alfie starts to chuckle - then to wheeze with laughter.

ALFIE
 Oh, we're quite the Celtic braveheart in front of an audience, aren't we? He forgets how important this job is for him.

Vernon has no smart answer.

ALFIE (CONT'D)
Well then, this floor needs to be
polished again, thanks to our unwanted
guest...

He points at Bella's dirty footprints on the old tiles.

ALFIE (CONT'D)
...any time in the next thirty seconds
would be good, Vernon.

VERNON
But I've got to get back, the baby-sitter
has to go at nine.

Bella clocks the wall clock - 8:37pm.

ALFIE
Well you'd better get polishing then,
hadn't you?

Behind Alfie's back Vernon mimes strangling him, and mutters
something in Welsh. Bella smiles ever so slightly.

BELLA
Diolch Y Faw. (Welsh for 'Good evening')

A big smile spreads across Vernon's face, as he starts to
polish the floor.

ALFIE
The saboteur speaks. Is that the
international language of flower killers?

VERNON
Diolch Y Faw. And where did you learn to
speak Welsh? (*in Welsh*)

BELLA
And here's the latest news. (*in Welsh*)

The penny takes a moment to drop. He laughs.

VERNON
Well, it's better than nothing. What's
your name?

BELLA
Bella Brown. And the daytime high will be
20 degrees. (*in Welsh*)

Alfie looks like every word is hurting his ears.

ALFIE
Please God, Milly, make it stop.

Bella goes over to Vernon and kneels down.

BELLA
I'll do it.

VERNON
It's alright, luv. It's all part of the job.

She gently takes the cloth off him and starts to polish. Alfie watches her - he is almost impressed.

VERNON (CONT'D)
Honest, luv, I don't mind.

BELLA
Go on. You'll be late.

ALFIE
You're not only stupid, Vernon, but ungracious with it. Aren't you going to thank the girl?

VERNON
(To Bella)
Are you sure? It's just that my kids, they'll be worried.

She just carries on meticulously.

VERNON (CONT'D)
Thank you.
(to Alfie)
They abolished slavery in 1834, you know.

ALFIE
I know, and the whole country's gone downhill ever since.

Vernon leaves. A bemused Alfie watches Bella as she finishes polishing the entire kitchen floor. It's spotless.

41 INT.BELLA'S FLAT - LATER 41

Bella checks all the locks again and again. Her world of safety was shattered by the evening's events. She retrieves Billy's drawing from her pocket, clutches it to her chest.

42 INT. BELLA'S FLAT - NEXT MORNING 42

Bella is asleep in her bed. A loud KNOCKING punctures the silence. Bella sits bolt upright.

43 INT. BELLA'S FLAT - SAME 43

Bella peers through the spy-hole, sees Vernon's wide grin. She cautiously opens her front door. Standing there is Vernon, in his hand is a worn cloth carrier bag. He holds it up triumphantly. Behind him are RHIAN and AMY, his very much non-identical nine-year-old twins.

VERNON

Bella, this is Rhian and Amy.

From their hair to their toes, they are immaculately non-symmetrical. Amy smiles. Bella tries but fails to smile back.

VERNON (CONT'D)

Or Amy and Rhian, any way you like really. Breakfast?

BELLA

What ?

VERNON

Least I could do after last night. Now where's 'la cuisine'? Let the dog see the rabbit.

Bella is floundering outside her comfort zone. She does her best to stand in the way and turn back the Welsh tide, but Vernon blusters past her.

BELLA

Well, that's very thoughtful of you Vernon, but there's really no need.

He's in the kitchen now.

VERNON

Nonsense. It'll be a pleasure. Not exactly far out of the way now, is it?

He takes a sneaky look in the cupboards. He spies row upon row of colour-sorted tinned food. He looks in the fridge. Same deal.

VERNON (CONT'D)

Heavens to Betsy! It's food prison.

He empties his bag of fresh vegetables.

BELLA

(desperate)

I need to get ready for work.

VERNON

Go ahead, don't let me stop you. The girls haven't eaten, so I need to get them fuelled up for school. Prime their brains for maximum informational intake.

43A INT. BELLA'S BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

43A

Bella stands at her bathroom mirror, waiting for her heavy-breathing reflection to tell her what to do...

44 INT. BELLA'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

44

Vernon SHOUTS to Bella from the kitchen as he expertly scoops a wonderful looking breakfast of free range poached eggs, homemade muffins, mushrooms and spinach onto three plates.

VERNON

You'll be off before you know it, hurling yourself upon the day with a body full of nutrients... isn't that right, girls?

AMY

Yes, Dad.

Vernon sets the plates in front of the twins and they dig in. Bella peers around the bathroom door, and Vernon spots her.

VERNON

Chow time!

Bella sits at her small dining table, her world violated. She looks at the clock - 7:18, not 'chow time' at all.

VERNON (CONT'D)

Now the Portabello mushrooms are seasoned with garlic and olive oil, and I put a touch of homemade chilli jam on them to bring them to life. A gastronomic defibrillator, I am.

Bella stares at her plate in mute horror. She looks to Vernon, who smiles with confident anticipation. Bella looks to the girls, who eat enthusiastically. Silence but for the clatter of cutlery.

VERNON (CONT'D)

No time for chit-chat, love. Dig in.

Bella prods the food around her plate until it is separated like her airline meals. Vernon is fascinated.

Bella looks at the clock - 7:19. She battles her internal clock, then slowly pops a morsel past her lips. Vernon is relieved.

VERNON (CONT'D)

No wonder you're such a slender little thing. Not the most nutritious provisions in the larder, eh?

(points to his temple)

The old bonce needs premium unleaded. You're trying to run it on 2 stroke.

Bella is trying her best to nibble politely.

VERNON (CONT'D)
 You don't have to eat it all, love. I
 always make big portions. It's the way he
 likes it next door.

Bella looks relieved. Vernon looks at his watch.

VERNON (CONT'D)
 Right girls, chop chop. Time and tide.

The girls kiss him and then go to leave.

VERNON (CONT'D)
 And a thank you to Bella for her
 hospitality ...

AMY
 Thanks, Bella.

Bella smiles, nods. Rhian goes to shake Bella's hand - Bella
 looks at her like she's lost her mind. The girls leave.

VERNON
 They keep me strong, those two.
 (beat)
 My wife passed away, you see. A fine
 woman, and a wonderful mother.
 (beat)
 Just me and my princesses now.

Bella helps him out of the emotionally awkward moment.

BELLA
 The breakfast was delicious.

VERNON
 (he almost blushes)
 Well, I haven't heard that in a while.
 Thank you, Bella. An absolute pleasure.

He watches as Bella meticulously clears up.

BELLA
 He is a bully, your employer. You
 shouldn't have to put up with it.

VERNON
 You get used to it. And the old
 curmudgeon pays well...

Vernon stares out the rear window, points over her shoulder.

VERNON (CONT'D)
 ... what the hell is he doing?

Bella turns, sees Alfie in her back garden, taking pictures.

45 EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN - MOMENTS LATER

45

Bella arrives at the rear doorway, shouting over to Alfie.

BELLA
Do you mind?

Alfie finishes off the roll of film and turns to them.

ALFIE
You might have won the hearts of my slow-witted staff, but not me - I can't forgive this...

He gestures to the wreck of a garden.

BELLA
Why are you doing this to me?

ALFIE
Because people have to learn, Miss Brown. It's called responsibility. Anathema to you I suspect, but an important part of the human condition.
(to Vernon)
And you, leeks-for-brains, are late.

VERNON
No I'm not.

Alfie looks at his watch.

ALFIE
My mistake. You're absolutely right.

Alfie keeps his eyes on his watch and waits a few seconds for it to become one minute past eight.

ALFIE (CONT'D)
Now you're late. I won't tolerate tardiness, so you might as well go home because I will not be paying you for today, you Welsh moron!

Alfie starts to go back into his garden. Vernon steps out past Bella, and almost immediately starts sneezing.

VERNON
Alfie.

Alfie ignores him.

VERNON (CONT'D)
Alfie!

ALFIE
What is it?

VERNON
I quit.

ALFIE
What?

VERNON
I warned you. You can shove your job.

ALFIE
(amused)
Really...?

VERNON
You bet.

ALFIE
And what about your poor daughters? Is it
a life of chimney sweeping for them, or
will you set up the family pick-pocketing
business you've always dreamt of?

VERNON
I'll find something.

ALFIE
Correct... poverty! You're fired.

VERNON
Will that be my first verbal warning
then?

ALFIE
You're sacked Vernon. End of story.

VERNON
Have you ever heard of the three stage
dismissal process?

ALFIE
I'm sorry?

VERNON
Now let me see. I've been with you for
five years - that's a minimum of five
months' notice pay. I could show you a
copy of the Employment Act if you like.

ALFIE
You'd be better off rehearsing 'would sir
like chips with that?', save yourself
some time.

Bella watches the verbal sparring like a tennis game.

VERNON

And I'm sure you can show all the up-to-date National Insurance stamps you've paid for me and Milly over the years?

Alfie shudders with rage.

ALFIE

Don't give me that lefty clap-trap.

Bella blurts out without thinking:

BELLA

He can work for me...

ALFIE

What?

VERNON

What?

Vernon stops, then looks to Bella, who is nervous as hell.

BELLA (CONT'D)

You can work for me... if you want to.

Vernon grabs this unexpected lifeline.

VERNON

I do... I want to.

(to Alfie)

Seems like I'm working for her now, Alfie... and you're trespassing.

Alfie scowls at both of them and turns on his heel.

ALFIE

Make the most of it. You deserve each other.

46 INT. BELLA'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

46

Vernon and Bella step back inside the house.

BELLA

Maybe I was a little hasty...

VERNON

No, I've got a good feeling about this. A fresh start. It'll be nice to feel appreciated.

BELLA

I don't know how I'll pay you.

VERNON

Yeah, but he's got to keep paying me, so you don't have to. It's a win-win.

He looks around and notices for the first time how immaculately clean Bella's flat is.

VERNON (CONT'D)
Have you already got a cleaner?

BELLA
Just me.

VERNON
Right... Ah, but there's cleaning and
then there's cleaning...

He smiles to himself and reaches up above the cooker and runs his finger over the top of it...

BELLA
Please don't...

VERNON
No shame in a bit of grime, love. No
offence, but there are some things that
only a professional is gonna...

To his disappointment there's not a speck of dust.

VERNON (CONT'D)
(Looking at his clean finger)
...spot.

Bella spots the clock.

BELLA
Oh no! Work! I can't be late again.

Bella goes into a tailspin. She can't go through her usual routine because he's there. Vernon turns on the TV and finds the Welsh channel. He is beside himself. He settles into an armchair as a Welsh soap opera starts.

VERNON
Brilliant! Just a couple of minutes
immersing myself in the culture of the
motherland and then I'll put my mind to
culinary creation.

Bella appears having dressed in less time than she's ever had. She surreptitiously fiddles and checks, Vernon stares at her, bemused.

BELLA
Don't touch anything.

She leaves. Vernon slips further down the armchair making himself more comfortable. He hears noises at the door. On closer inspection he sees Bella through the spy hole checking the front door. He heaves it open.

VERNON
Is something wrong?

Bella is duly panicked.

BELLA
No.

Vernon stares at her, she wishes he would disappear.

VERNON
Well then?

BELLA
Right.
(beat)
Bye.

Bella doesn't move. Nor does Vernon.

BELLA (CONT'D)
Right, bye.

Still no movement.

VERNON
(sunnily)
Ta-Ra!

Vernon shuts the door in her face. Bella mutters under her breath. She turns to see the bus in the distance. She runs.

47 INT. LIBRARY - DAY

47

Bella runs into the library and can't see Bramble anywhere. She slips off her wet coat, checks the time (8.59) and positions herself at the front desk, out of breath and utterly flummoxed.

Bramble opens the main door at 9.00 precisely, just as Billy breezes in.

BILLY
Good day once again. You know I had a bit of a moment back there. Couldn't remember whether I was coming or going. It's roundabouts, you see. I forget at which point I've entered and which point I must exit. It ruins my sense of time and place. Now where was I?

He just stands there in his trademark forgetful daze. Bella spies his lunch box.

BELLA
(whispering)
Your lunch box.

He looks under his arm.

BILLY
It is, yes.

BELLA
I'm just saying, you could check your lunch box. If it's full, you're coming to town, empty, you're going home.

He checks his lunch box.

BILLY
Brilliant. I shall leave it open on the passenger seat from now on. Simple, effective.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Let the day begin! Gian Lorenzo Bernini?

BELLA
Sculpture or architecture?

BILLY
Sculpture, every time.

BELLA
Fourth aisle on the right. Top left shelf.

Billy smiles.

47A INT. LIBRARY - DAY

47A

Bella is looking from behind a shelf, spying on Billy. He looks up and she pretends to be working. Bella goes red from the toes up.

BILLY
Do you know 'The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa'?

BELLA
Oh...yes. I've seen pictures.

Bella comes closer, Billy spins to book to show her.

BILLY
No, no, you must see it in the flesh, in the Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome. Extraordinary. He made tons of marble float. Defied gravity with beauty, he destroyed logic with emotion. That's fascinating, don't you think?

BRAMBLE (O.C.)
A-hem!

Bella turns to see a sign from Bramble, "*Horticulture*". Just then Mr. Godfrey enters backwards, swinging his umbrella to the floor. He bumps into Bramble from behind, and both are suitably embarrassed.

Bella and Billy share a smile and look away.

48 INT. BELLA'S FLAT - EVENING

48

A crumpled drawing hits the side of an overflowing wastepaper basket. Bella is surrounded by crumpled up bits of paper, the drawing pad on the desk is empty. A huge book of Bernini's sculptures lies open.

Vernon serves up a meal, arranged just the way she likes. He puts on his coat. In the opposite corner of the room, the twins watch Welsh TV, rapt.

VERNON
Dinner is served.

Bella sits down, eats hesitantly.

BELLA
This is wonderful.

VERNON
Good. And the vegetables haven't been
tinned for decades, so you might actually
be able to taste them.

BELLA
Where did you learn to cook like this?

VERNON
My mum, god rest her.

BELLA
Was she a cook by trade?

VERNON
No, she was a total gem, but she couldn't
cook for toffee. So as soon as I could
reach the stove I took matters into my
own hands. Had to.
You are what you eat, as they say...
(he spies her cupboards)
... surprised you don't glow in the dark.

Vernon lifts the tin-opener from its hook and bins it.

VERNON (CONT'D)
Bella, I hope you don't mind - I did a
little laundry for you today. Threw in a
few of my own things....

Vernon pulls out a drying rack full of PINK TOWELS that used to be white.

He holds up a single red sock.

VERNON (CONT'D)
My guess is that this little fella is to
blame.

Bella looks at all of her ruined towels and winces. The phone rings. Bella jumps. It obviously doesn't ring that often. She picks it up cautiously, almost suspiciously.

ALFIE (O.C.)
(after a quiet beat)
Give me back my cook!

BELLA
Who is this?

49 INT. ALFIE'S HOUSE. DINING ROOM - INTERCUT PHONE CALL

49

Alfie sits in the darkened room contemplating a plate of mush that looks like baby food. Milly staggers around behind him.

ALFIE
Your nemesis.

BELLA
Who?

ALFIE
It's Alfred Stephenson. Your next door
neighbour.

BELLA
Oh, hello. I'm sorry again for all the
inconvenience the other.../

ALFIE
GIVE ME BACK MY COOK!

Bella hangs up in a state of shock. Alfie grimaces and pushes the plate away from him.

50 INT. BELLA'S BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

50

Bella is asleep in her bed. Someone is loudly KNOCKING on her front door. Bella sits bolt upright.

51 I/E. BELLA'S FLAT - DAY

51

The banging continues. Bella looks through her Spy-hole - no one is there. Then suddenly a face looms into sight close to the door, making Bella fall backwards in a heap with shock.

Standing outside is her landlord LICHFIELD, an unpleasant greasy-haired little man. He has an old Polaroid camera around his neck and carries a clipboard.

He hears her stumble. He leans down to the letterbox and talks through it.

LICHFIELD
I haven't got all day, Miss Brown.

Bella responds through the letterbox.

BELLA
I wasn't expecting you til the start of the month, Mr. Lichfield.

Lichfield smiles an insidious smile.

LICHFIELD
I'm here on urgent business, Miss Brown.
A matter of grave importance.

She opens the door, and he pushes past her, looking at his clipboard. Bella looks outside hoping to see Vernon.

52 INT. BELLA'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

52

LICHFIELD
Now let me see. Yes yes Flat 2, 6
Primrose Gardens. I have all the
appropriate paperwork pertaining to this
property and the relevant photographic
documentation. Good, good.

He surveys the immaculate living room.

LICHFIELD (CONT'D)
Well this all seems shipshape, Miss
Brown. Very soothing on the eye.
But I've received a complaint.

BELLA
What!? From who?

53 EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN - MOMENTS LATER

53

Lichfield steps into the inhospitable garden. Bella stands in the doorway, too scared to take a step outside.

Lichfield tuts and shakes his head.

LICHFIELD
Oh my word. This is much worse than I
expected. You agreed to keep the property
in sound repair, Miss Brown.
The property, Miss Brown, includes the
garden.

He is looking at a Polaroid of the garden that was taken when Bella moved in. It is perfect.

BELLA

I know. I'm not much for the great outdoors, more of an .../

LICHFIELD

I'm sure you'll agree that this is not in sound repair, Miss Brown. A remarkable level of neglect indeed. A reverse makeover, if you like.

He chuckles to himself.

BELLA

I'll sort it out. I promise...

LICHFIELD

Miss Brown, I am a fair man, but I am hidebound by the law as detailed in the contract signed by your good self.

Bella is beginning to panic.

BELLA

I know, but I have a dislike of... well, a kind of distaste for... you see, plants and I don't get along. So it's not exactly neglect, more like a fear and loathing. But I assure you I can fix that. Everything will go back to normal.

LICHFIELD

Laws exist to provide boundaries, Miss Brown. And this wanton neglect falls outside your legal obligations and you are, therefore, in breach, Miss Brown.

He hands her a bound copy of the contract.

LICHFIELD (CONT'D)

Page 7. Section 2.4 to be precise.

VERNON (O.S.)

Hello, Bella.

Bella and Lichfield turn. Vernon reaches out to shake hands, but Lichfield's hands are full.

VERNON (CONT'D)

Vernon Gwyther. Miss Brown's ...

(beat)

... partner. Recently appointed.

LICHFIELD

Gideon Lichfield, landlord. We were just discussing the spectacular amount of neglect here relating to the
(holds out the Polaroids)

"the pristine 39 foot south-facing garden with lawn and well stocked borders, all in immaculate order".

VERNON

Oh, right. Quite new on the scene you see. Just about to get stuck into the garden. My new project. Major priority, top of the list.

LICHFIELD

Too late, I'm afraid. I'm going to have to ask you to vacate by the end of the month.

VERNON

(to Bella)

You didn't tell me you were expecting Mr. Lichfield this morning.

BELLA

I wasn't.

VERNON

(to Lichfield)

Did you make an appointment to come over?

LICHFIELD

Pardon me?

VERNON

Section fifteen of the Property Act, pertaining to tenants' rights. The law is very clear on this point, i.e. that the landlord must give clear warning when he wants to inspect the property.

LICHFIELD

Fine, I'll come back later.

VERNON

That's not convenient. Section 34. 'A convenient date must be mutually agreed.'

LICHFIELD

Tomorrow...?

VERNON

Not convenient.

LICHFIELD

Friday?

Vernon crosses his arms.

VERNON

No good, sorry.

LICHFIELD
Next Monday ...?

VERNON
Nope, no can do.

LICHFIELD
All right then! When?

VERNON
We need at least one calendar month's
notice - Section 12.4, as I'm sure you'll
remember.

Lichfield smiles and shows off his teeth that resemble a bag
of chips.

54 I/E. BELLA'S FLAT - MOMENTS LATER

54

Lichfield is standing outside the front door. Vernon and
Bella are inside.

LICHFIELD
There will be repercussions, Miss Brown.
You have exactly one month from today.

VERNON
All the very best! Missing you already!

Vernon slams the door in his face.

BELLA
How do you know so much about..?

VERNON
One of the very few benefits of having
next to nothing, and wondering who's
going to come and try and take that
precious little away, is that you learn
pretty quick how to hang on to what
you've got. Breakfast?

55 EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN. MORNING - LATER

55

Bella's face is pressed against the glass, looking out at the
garden.

The garden door crashes open and Bella stands there
defiantly. She wears overalls, heavy boots, gloves and a bee-
keeper's hat. She looks like a Victorian diver. She stares
directly into the mid distance. In there, somewhere, used to
be a garden.

Bella prods around and picks up odd pieces of debris. She
doesn't really know where to start or what to do. While doing
this she makes her way to the dividing fence between her home
and Alfie's, inquisitive.

She climbs precariously up onto a mangy old crate to look over the fence. Laid out before us, we see Alfie's garden. It is simply breathtaking.

The wild flowers, the pond, the rose garden, the herb garden and the lawn like a billiard table. It is enclosed from the outside world behind a tall curtain of greenery. Bella is mesmerized.

BELLA
Mary, Mother of God!

Her face lights up at the magical sight. She finally turns despondently to look at her own lot and lets out a sigh.

55A INT. ALFIE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS 55A

Alfie is reading in his favorite armchair. A raw buzzing sound from next door begins. It irritates him greatly.

55B EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN - CONTINUOUS 55B

Bella exits the shed, wielding an old strimmer that buzzes violently in her hands. She is like David facing Goliath, but with a strimmer.

55C EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN - LATER 55C

A cacophony of strimming sound fills the garden as Bella fells everything in her path. By the end she lies in a breathless heap in the middle of the brutalised garden.

Alfie looks over his fence at her. He sees the heads of some flowers which now lay scattered on the ground.

ALFIE
Lonicera aurea reticulata.

Bella looks up in the direction of the voice, slightly startled by his sudden appearance.

BELLA
Sorry?

ALFIE
Honeysuckle to you.
(beat)
Personally I've always thought that they looked better attached to the plant itself.

Bella looks guiltily at the butchered plants.

ALFIE (CONT'D)
See over there?

Alfie points to some blue buds that have been mown down. Bella looks to where he points.

ALFIE (CONT'D)

They were Delphinium Volkenfrienzen or Royal Delphinium. Great big iridescent flowers, beautiful scent. Would've been flowering any day now if you hadn't cut them into little pieces. I think they were the last living things in your horticultural graveyard.

Bella drags herself up and starts to pull pieces of shrubbery from her hair.

BELLA

I'm just trying to tidy it up a bit.

ALFIE

I'm sure that's what Hitler said about Europe. Anyway, enough small talk. Give me back my cook.

BELLA

What? No.

ALFIE

Give him back. I need him.

BELLA

You should have thought of that before you treated him like dirt.

ALFIE

Damn you woman, stop being so childish.
GIVE ME BACK MY COOK!

Bella storms into the house.

Alfie isn't sure what she's up to, he peers after her.

Bella comes back outside. She is wearing an antique WALKMAN and headphones under her helmet.

Alfie shouts 'GIVE ME BACK MY COOK' a couple more times, but all Bella sees is a mute old man's face contorting and going purple as she listens to her music.

56 I/E. BELLA'S GARDEN - LATER

56

It's midday. Bella is having a hard time beating the garden into shape. The brambles and thorny weeds have clogged up the strimmer and she's been reduced to hacking at them with a rusty hoe. All the time she battles with her fear of the foliage.

Behind the closed kitchen door, Vernon watches her whilst peeling carrots. Bella spies him and eventually frustration gets the better of her. She shouts.

BELLA

You could come and help, you know.

Vernon comes to the door, cups his hand to his ear.

VERNON

You what, love?

BELLA

I could do with some help here, if it's not too much bother.

Vernon sneezes, right on cue.

VERNON

I'd be no good to man or beast - hayfever. Chronic allergies. My head swells up like a pumpkin and my eyes weld themselves shut.

Alfie is standing by the connecting gate, watching. Milly walks over and hands him a glass of iced tea. He takes a sip, looks at Bella.

Bella licks her dry lips and, as if on cue, Vernon arrives at her side with a glass of homemade lemonade and a wonderful picnic basket. Behind the tea towel that he's wrapped around his nose and mouth to protect him from pollen, we can tell Vernon is smiling.

He lays out a cloth on the one piece of cleared garden and serves up a delicious looking lunch. He then hot foots it back indoors, sneezing repeatedly.

Milly returns and hands Alfie a soggy sandwich. Her peers in.

ALFIE

Crumbed Spam! If you're trying to kill me, woman, just shoot me now.

Bella takes a bite of her quiche and grins at Alfie. Vernon waves at him from the safety of the kitchen.

Alfie visibly reddens.

57 EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN - EVENING

57

Bella is exhausted. The garden is a mess. Despite all of her hard work it somehow looks even uglier than when she started.

Bella takes off her Walkman and wipes her dirty brow.

ALFIE (O.S.)

I'll tell you something, Miss Brown.

Slightly startled, Bella turns to him and sighs.

BELLA
Do you have to?

ALFIE
You're the worst gardener I've ever seen. You seem to specialize in sucking the very life out of any living thing. Look what you've done. Maybe your greatest literary creation will be a reflection of your own beastly soul. Bellacus morticus, the garden monster.

BELLA
(under her breath)
Base it on you then?

Alfie cups his ear.

ALFIE
Hang on a minute. I can hear something. Yes. Unmistakable. It's those sweet woodland creatures, wide eyed and innocent...and they're crying after mistakenly straying from the magic forest into in Bella's apocalyptic urban wilderness. What will they do? Who will save them?

BELLA
That bitterness will eat you up, Mr. Stephenson.

Bella looks around her hacked and maimed garden.

ALFIE
There's something that I'd like you to do for me, and I'd like you to think very carefully before answering.

BELLA
I bet I can guess.

ALFIE
Give me back my cook!

Bella mouths the words at the same time as Alfie speaks them.

58 INT. BELLA'S KITCHEN - LATER

58

Bella is sitting at the dinner table looking downcast. She halfheartedly pushes the beautifully presented food around her plate. The twins are doing their homework in the corner.

VERNON
What's the matter?

BELLA
Nothing... I don't know... everything.

VERNON
I see. Sounds tricky.

BELLA
It isn't. It's very simple actually. I'm kidding myself. I'm no writer and I'm certainly no gardener.

VERNON
Of course you're a writer! My mum said that you only fail if you don't try.

Bella gestures to her artwork and writing in the bin.

BELLA
Well I've tried and failed. I'm going to be evicted. Then I'll be homeless, and you'll be unemployed. And it's all my fault.

VERNON
A-ha. So, basically, you're feeling sorry for yourself?

BELLA
No... It's not as simple as that Vernon... I mean...you need to look at the facts...you need to weigh up the..

Vernon smiles at her.

BELLA (CONT'D)
(Embarrassed, quietly)
...what?

VERNON
I can fix all that.

BELLA
You can?

VERNON
Yup. Stand up. Come on.

Nervous, Bella stands.

VERNON (CONT'D)
Now stand very still, because I don't want you to get hurt.

BELLA
Neither do I.

VERNON
Quiet, I need to concentrate.

Vernon walks over to Bella and gives her a hug. He almost engulfs her.

Bella is surprised and embarrassed, she pats Vernon on the back and gently starts to push him away, awkward but touched by the profound nature of human touch, eyes welling.

VERNON (CONT'D)

Bella, when was the last time you had a hug?

59 EXT. ORPHANAGE - FLASHBACK

59

Baby Bella is hugged for the last time by the kindly old swimmer who found her in Hyde Park before handing her to one of the nuns. We linger on his smiling face, and Baby Bella's warm eyes.

60 INT. BELLA'S KITCHEN/ALFIE'S LIVING ROOM - SAME

60

Bella relents and hugs back. To her surprise it really does make her feel better. The look on her face gives away her simple pleasure and exposes the lack of physicality in her life.

BELLA

Thank you, Vernon.

Vernon realizes how important it may have been for Bella. He slowly releases her.

VERNON

Right, now get on with... conjuring up your creative alchemy. Because I don't want to have to go back and work for that mean old bugger. Get your skates on.

The phone rings. Bella answers it. (Intercut the call)

ALFIE

Bella, I didn't want to have to spell it out to you, but... I'm a dying man. Unlike you, I don't have long left. Do you understand? Every morning I wake up and wonder - is this the day I shuffle off this mortal coil? It's not like people say, you don't treasure every moment - you fear it. Because time is my enemy. I mourn every minute, every precious second marks my life draining away.

BELLA

Oh. That's dreadful. I suspected you weren't in the rudest of health but I had no idea that...

ALFIE

I don't have much to give me comfort, no friends, no family, no one to love - I only have the beauty of nature, and the promise of a hearty last meal for a condemned man. I beg you, if you have any pity, any compassion - send Vernon home to me and we can put all this silly mess behind us.

BELLA

I didn't realise you were so ill. I'm so sorry. Of course I'll speak to Vernon and I'm sure we can come to some...

Vernon grabs and hangs up the phone.

BELLA (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

VERNON

Don't listen to him.

BELLA

He's dying, Vernon. I had no idea. Why didn't you tell me?

VERNON

That old coot has been dying from the same heart attack for the last ten years. It would take a personal intervention by the Good Lord Himself to finish him off.

Vernon's hands are clasped in prayer.

BELLA

Vernon!

VERNON

Let me guess, was it "I mourn every minute, every precious second". Or was it "I have no friends, no family, no one to love"?

BELLA

(shocked)

He used both.

VERNON

Bloody hell, he's getting desperate.

The phone rings again. Bella picks it up.

BELLA

No!

She hangs up.

61 EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN - SUNSET

61

Bella finishes packing garden debris into bin bags in her astronaut's outfit. As Bella clears away she occasionally looks at Alfie who is standing, watching her, from his place by the gate. Bella ties up the last bag and throws it onto the pile. She looks up and faces Alfie.

BELLA

You know I believed those things you said. I thought you were really talking to me. But you weren't, you were mocking me, as usual.

ALFIE

And why would you think that?

BELLA

Vernon told me how many times he heard the exact same stories. Shame on you.

ALFIE

You should doubt only a man who changes his story. I only repeat myself, Miss Brown, in the vague hope that someone will really hear me.

Bella is caught off guard by what seems to be honest emotion from Alfie.

They stare at each other for a moment and then the heavens open and rain pours down. The sun is still out and its golden light causes the raindrops to sparkle.

Bella watches as Alfie looks up and smiles.

ALFIE (CONT'D)

It's breathtaking, isn't it?

The red sun is sinking below the horizon.

ALFIE (CONT'D)

Sparks that fall from a giant furnace.

Bella looks around at the glittering red rain, she wipes the hair from her eyes.

BELLA

It's fantastic.

ALFIE

In some parts of the world, they hold parties when the rain arrives. Here, people scurry around and dive for cover. It's the most important currency on earth, Miss Brown.

Yet in this green and pleasant land,
 where we take so many things for granted,
 it is seen as little more than a way of
 ruining expensive hairdos and making cab
 drivers rich.

BELLA
 You're odd.

ALFIE
 Says she. Here.

He throws her a bag of seeds.

ALFIE (CONT'D)
Helianthus. The giant sunflower. Plant
 them over there, on the south side of the
 garden. Utterly beautiful, the simplest
 of designs, but first they need warmth
 and light.

We now see what Bella's imagination sees - a life-size hand
 drawn version of the accelerated lifecycle of a sunflower, as
 it sprouts from the soil and grows to a towering flower, just
 as Alfie describes.

ALFIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 The open flower follows the arc of the
 sun from dawn until dusk, extracting the
 maximum energy from each day.

Alfie walk away in to the hammering rain, leaving Bella
 alone, soaking. He stops and turns.

ALFIE (CONT'D)
 Think about that, Miss Brown.

62-63 OMITTED

62-63

EXT. BELLA'S HOUSE - DAWN

The rising sun clips distant rooftops, sending long shadows
 down the street.

64 EXT. BELLA'S HOUSE - NEXT MORNING

64

Bella exits her front door and locks it. She pauses and then
 re-locks it. She leaves and then...

Returns to re-lock the door again, suddenly from inside we
 can hear Vernon shout -

VERNON
 IT'S SHUT, IT'S BLOODY SHUT!

Bella jumps back from the door in fright and hurries off to
 work. Halfway down the road, an interminable line of school
 children cross the road blocking her path.

In the distance we see what we suppose is her bus, pulling away into the distance. She flails her arms in frustration.

65 INT. LIBRARY - DAY

65

Bella hurtles into the library, flustered and late by one measly minute. Bramble doesn't give Bella the chance to even take her coat off. The sign shouts "OFFICE!". Inside Bramble is waiting, perspiring heavily and eating a macaroon.

BELLA

I am sorry, Miss Bramble. Problem with the buses this morning.

MISS BRAMBLE

I suspect that the problem lies with you and not public transport. I wouldn't be making this point if your tardiness wasn't pathological.

We hear a loud cough - it's Billy standing at the counter.

BILLY

Hate to interrupt, but where would I find Hercule Lampana?

MISS BRAMBLE

So sorry. Lampana, you say.
(going to the index card box)
Let me see.

Bella adjusts her hair.

BELLA

Architecture. Back wall on the right, third shelf down.

BILLY

(broad smile)
Thank you.

BELLA

We have a book of his early illustrations as well as his architectural designs.

Miss Bramble looks a bit put out.

BILLY

That's just what I'm looking for. Thanks so much for your help.

BELLA

You're welcome.

Billy leaves to get his book but not without turning again to smile at her. Bramble notices, and if looks could kill, Bella would be dead on the floor.

66 INT. LIBRARY - LATER

66

Bella files index cards and is unprepared as Billy approaches. He drops his papers, creates a proper mess which he promptly clears. Paper and notes stick out from every pocket.

BILLY
Goodnight, miss. And thank you for your help.

Bella flushes again.

BELLA
Oh. Thanks. It's nothing really.

BILLY
What's your name, by the way? Don't know what to call you.

Bramble's voice crackles over the tannoy.

MISS BRAMBLE
Shhhhhhhh!

BELLA
(whispering)
Bella...Bella Brown.

Guttermal shushing from the cheap seats.

BILLY
(also whispering)
I'm William, William Tranter but you must call me Billy. Everyone does.
See you soon, Bella.

She nods, smiles. He leaves.

BELLA
(to herself, still whispering)
Billy... Billy Tranter...

Bella rolls his name around her mouth as if it tasted of strawberries and chocolate. She goes over to investigate the desk where Billy was sitting. She smiles as she sees the mess, a strange reaction for someone so obsessive. She tidies up expertly and then spots a beautiful little origami duck that he's left.

ALFIE (O.S.)
Excuse me, young lady.

Bella freezes with fear at the sound of Alfie's voice. She slips the origami gem into her pocket. She turns around slowly. Her fear is well founded.

ALFIE (CONT'D)
 (smiling sweetly)
 Would you be so kind as to point me to
 the section dealing with Home Cookery?

Alfie is all sweetness and light, not letting on that they
 know each other. Bella is understandably wary.

BELLA
 Certainly, sir. It's the third aisle on
 your left. Lower two shelves, right hand
 side.

ALFIE
 Thank you. So helpful.

BELLA
 We have just recently received Walker
 McGuinness's latest: *"Dinner for One -
 The New Black", and Nancy Wednesday's
 "Simple Recipes for Solo Dining" is very
 popular.*

ALFIE
 Fascinating. You seem very well informed.

BELLA
 Thank you. We try to be of assistance.

And now the veneer of civility slips away as his voice rises.

ALFIE
 Well the best assistance would be to give
 me back my bloody cook, you heartless
 young...

Bramble appears in a flash.

BRAMBLE
 (in a shouting whisper)
 Sir, the library is a sanctuary of
 learning, requiring silence at all time.
 AT ALL TIMES.

ALFIE
 Learning? So how is it that your
 employees have learnt nothing of
 compassion for their starving fellow man,
 for the hungry, aged and decrepit, the
 forgotten generation who made this
 country great...

Bella cowers by the desk, apoplectic with fear. Bramble darts
 a look in her direction.

BRAMBLE
 (to Alfie)
 Out. Out! Immediately. I'm calling the
 police.

Bramble moves next to Alfie, shooing him towards the exit.

ALFIE
 Great. Have her arrested. She slaughters
 the flora and fauna that keep this planet
 alive.

Bramble accelerates her shooing as they near the exit.

BRAMBLE
 WILL YOU BE SILENT AND LEAVE!

ALFIE
 (over his shoulder)
 GIVE ME BACK MY COOK!

Alfie finally exits. Bramble, about to explode, turns towards
 Bella.

67 INT. LIBRARY - MOMENTS LATER

67

Inside Bramble's soundproof glass room, Bella is the victim
 of another verbal assault.

68 INT. BELLA'S KITCHEN - EVENING

68

Bella sits at the table eating one of Vernon's delicious
 creations - goat's cheese and caramelised onion tarte with a
 Roquefort pear and walnut salad - while reading a book on the
 architect Lampana. Vernon watches Welsh TV.

Behind him we see the origami duck in pride of place on a
 shelf next to the mechanical bird drawing.

BELLA
 Where are the girls?

VERNON
 Staying with their Auntie Reenie.
 Probably wasted on Kit-Kats by now.
 She'll be scraping them off the ceiling.

BELLA
 What's this?

VERNON
 Like it?

BELLA
 It's wonderful.

Vernon proudly watches Bella stuffing it in. He also watches
 her looking at the Origami duck.

VERNON

Now, you seem in a better mood. What gives on planet Bella?

BELLA

Nothing.

VERNON

(looking at the origami duck)
That's not your handiwork is it?

Bella picks up the duck, shakes her head, and smiles. Vernon lights up.

VERNON (CONT'D)

Well I never! That's the "I can't keep it to myself" smile. I'd know it anywhere. What's his name?

Bella tries to hide her happy glow.

BELLA

Who?

VERNON

The lucky man. The paper-folder. Who is it?

BELLA

I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about, Vernon.

Bella goes bright red, hastily eats her last bite, and goes into the kitchen. Vernon mutters to himself.

VERNON

Well, what do you know? The girl's human after all.

69 EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN - DAY

69

Bella is snipping away absentmindedly in the garden. She manages to obliterate the only patch of flowers left. She realises too late and watches forlornly as the petals fall to the floor. She closes her eyes in surrender to her own stupidity.

ALFIE (O.C.)

I think you should stick to writing.

Bella looks up and finds Alfie back in his usual spot by the fence, but she won't dignify his remark with a response.

ALFIE (CONT'D)

Parents must read your stories to their children as a punishment. "No Daddy, please, anything but the Bella Brown book. I promise I'll behave".

BELLA
 (the frustration comes out)
 JUST TELL ME WHAT I SHOULD BE DOING, YOU
 HORRID, WRETCHED OLD MAN!

This brings an inquisitive Vernon to look out of the back door.

ALFIE
 And why would I furnish you with such
 advice?

BELLA
 I am trying my best here, I want to make
 a difference. If you had an ounce of
 humanity, you wouldn't just stand there
 gloating, you'd help me. Throw me a bone,
 anything!

Alfie is quietly triumphant that she's finally risen to it.
 He stares at her and then smiles.

ALFIE
 Alright then, I'll help.

BELLA
 You will?

ALFIE
 And you give me back my cook.

BELLA
 No.

ALFIE
 Yes.

BELLA
 He isn't a slave, he's not mine to give.
 If you'd treated him like a person...

VERNON (O.S.)
 I'll cook your meals, you vituperative
 waste of chemicals...

Vernon is at the back door. This stops Alfie in his tracks.
 His eyes light up. He claps.

ALFIE
 Wonderful. And five syllables, Vernon - I
 didn't know you had it in you.

VERNON
 But I'll not set foot inside that house.

ALFIE
 But ...
 (suspiciously)

...how are you going to cook for me if you won't come inside? I refuse to eat cold scraps out of plastic containers like some trainspotter on a windy platform in Runcorn, so if you're.../

VERNON

You pay me as usual for cooking, and help Bella fix up her garden - that way we all win.

ALFIE

Absolutely outrageous. This is extortionate, I've never...

VERNON

Take it or leave it, Alfie.

ALFIE

I'll take it.

70 INT. BELLA'S. KITCHEN - LATER

70

Vernon stands in Bella's kitchen looking through a new hole in the wall, connecting to a dumb waiter in Alfie's kitchen on the other side, where Alfie watches. A small hatch hangs open over the hole on Vernon's side.

VERNON

House rules. Breakfast at 8, lunch at 1, dinner at 6. Meals will be placed in the hatch at exactly these times and then, only when I've rung the bell twice, Milly can retrieve them. I'll give full serving instructions. This way I will never have to hear your voice or see your face.

ALFIE

But what if .../

Vernon slams the hatch shut before Alfie can reply.

71 INT. BELLA'S HALLWAY - NEXT MORNING

71

A small parcel wrapped in string and brown paper falls through the letter-box into the wire mail-basket hanging on the door.

Bella hears it land with a clatter.

72 INT. BELLA'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

72

At the table, Bella cautiously unwraps the parcel. Inside is a note from Alfie. Bella reads it out loud.

BELLA

To create a garden is an adventure which,
if properly handled, will last a
lifetime.

Bella puts the curious note to one side and carefully opens the rest of the packaging. Inside is a book - 'THE MAKING OF THE GARDEN' by Harold Truscott-Mildmay. She opens it and begins to read.

MALE (V.O.)

The eager horticulturalist journeys
through strange jungles, discovers new
species, and battles with wily beasts and
stubborn soils.

She sits down.

MALE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

His is a tale of difficulties overcome
and joys attained after prolonged toil,
of a journey in which the recompense lies
not only in the destination...

Bella stands, leaning over the table.

BELLA

..."but in the struggle towards it, every
step of which is strewn with slaughter
and victory."
Wow!

She is hooked, the pages turn faster and faster as she
breathes in the words.

73 EXT. BELLA'S KITCHEN - DAY

73

Vernon places a tray of food in the dumb waiter and rings the bell twice. We see Milly's face appear the other side. She's smiling, a bit tipsy. She sees Vernon. He winks at his old friend.

From over her shoulder, Alfie snaps at Milly.

ALFIE (O.S.)

Hurry up, woman. A man could die of
neglect in this place.

Vernon closes the hatch, crosses and sits by Bella as she eats breakfast. Bella looks through the well-thumbed book. She puts it down and starts to quote.

BELLA

"The true gardener extracts a greater joy
from three broad beans flowering in a tin
can on a window sill than the millionaire
ever drew from his palatial conservatory
and army of gardeners.'

VERNON
That's Alfie's, isn't it?

He picks it up, checks the inscription.

VERNON (CONT'D)
I've never known him to let that book out of his sight. It's the only thing I've ever seen the bloke care about.

The phone rings. Bella answers it.

BELLA
Thank you very much for the book. I love the illustrations.

ALFIE
You've read it?

BELLA
Twice.

ALFIE
All of it?

BELLA
Every word.

ALFIE
So what are you talking to me for? You've got work to do.

74-76 OMITTED

74-76

77 EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN - DAY

77

Loads of bin liners are now full. Bella wipes her sweaty brow covering it with dirt.

BELLA
What now?

ALFIE
Now, you dig.

BELLA
Which bit?

Alfie makes a sweeping gesture with his hand, indicating the whole garden.

Bella looks at it and sighs.

78 EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN - EVENING

78

Bella has dug up almost a third of the garden. She's dirty and exhausted and aches all over. She pauses and surveys the scale of the task ahead.

At his upstairs window we see Alfie watch her. Bella resumes digging. Alfie almost smiles.

79-81 OMITTED

79-81

82 EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN - LATE EVENING

82

Bella is aggressively stabbing the soil with a trowel - she's really enjoying it too, as if she was attacking ice with a pick.

Alfie opens the gate and wanders over to her. He kneels down by her feet and picks up a handful of soil.

ALFIE

I thought you read the book.

BELLA

I did.

ALFIE

Then what's this?

BELLA

Soil?

ALFIE

No, these.

Alfie points to roots of the weeds that are in the soil.

ALFIE (CONT'D)

If you leave the roots of the weeds in the soil they'll start to grow back before you've even finished digging, and they'll strangle the life out of your new incarnation. The beauty of a garden is from within, my girl.

BELLA

But I've chopped them up into little pieces; I was thinking of Miss Bramble while I did it.

ALFIE

Well done...

(Bella smiles)

... for every shard of root a new weed will grow. Each is a time-bomb just waiting to go off.

Bella's smile drops. He hands her an old mesh garden sieve, and points back to the work she's already done.

ALFIE (CONT'D)

From the top.

83 INT. BELLA'S KITCHEN. LATER - EVENING

83

Bella walks in from the garden. She's utterly shattered.

VERNON

Bella, I was thinking of...

Bella picks up a homemade cookie from the side board and stuffs it into her mouth.

BELLA

My bed. I need my bed.

VERNON

I guess I'll see you tomorrow, then.

There's a loud thump from the next room.

Concerned, Vernon investigates.

84 INT. BELLA'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

84

Vernon discovers Bella fast asleep on her bed. She is still in her clothes and there's half a cookie hanging out of her mouth.

Vernon removes the cookie and covers her with a blanket.

He smiles and leaves.

84A INT. LIBRARY. DAY

84A

Bella stands at the desk stamping some books. She can barely stay awake. Her eyes start to droop, and her book-stamping halts. She's momentarily asleep standing up... until:

A sudden BANG of a pile of books being laid on the counter wakes her with a start.

As Bella jumps, she utters his name, even before she sees him.

BELLA

Billy!

And there he is, right in front of her.

BILLY

Bella.

They smile at one another.

85-86 OMITTED

85-86

87 EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN - LATER

87

Bella has dug the whole garden. She looks around, the garden is improving. Alfie watches from the other side of the gate.

ALFIE

You know, I think there might be a garden here after all.

Bella knows that this is the closest Alfie will come to complimenting her work.

BELLA

Harold's book, it's gripping. Where did you get it from?

ALFIE

We were friends. It was dear old Harold who showed me the path to true enlightenment and took me on a remarkable journey. Be careful with it - it's the only copy I have.

BELLA

I'm amazed that you trusted me with something so precious.

ALFIE

So am I.

BELLA

I bet even Harold would find this garden daunting.

ALFIE

Hah! I think Harold would relish the challenge - a totally blank canvas. This is your chance to shape your own masterpiece, Bella.

Alfie pushes open the gate. As Alfie walks around the garden he makes broad sweeping gestures with his hands.

ALFIE (CONT'D)

How will we build the colour palette? How will we entice the wildlife back? A budhlia bush for the butterflies, lupins and Hollyhocks for the bees. Fruit trees to mark the borders: verbena and foxgloves for height, then dahlias and michaelmas daisies. Roses, grasses - the choices are endless. A world of beautifully ordered chaos, Miss Brown.

He looks at her, realizes he's opened up more than he'd intended.

ALFIE (CONT'D)

That's chaos, Bella, not calamity. You have to understand the difference or we're not going to make any progress.

BELLA

'We'?

ALFIE

What?

BELLA

You said 'we'.

ALFIE

Don't be ridiculous.

Alfie looks skywards and starts to leave.

ALFIE (CONT'D)

Gardens are places where miracles happen. But if you have no imagination, I can't help you.

Bella looks around the empty garden trying to take in the gravitas of his words.

He raises his large umbrella just as a single drop splats onto it. Bella looks to the sky, just as large drops of rain begin to fall. It quickly becomes a deluge.

88 INT. BELLA'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

88

Bella is at her desk, soaking wet with a pink towel around her neck. She looks out into the garden and begins to sketch. She starts slowly at first and then gradually builds up momentum as her confidence grows.

Bella's face is a mixture of intense concentration and happiness.

89 EXT. HYDE PARK - DAY

89

In the early morning sun, Bella arrives at the river and takes a large bag of bread out of her bag. Ducks flock around her as she feeds them. One duck, a scraggy old Mallard with one leg, isn't getting anywhere near the action until Bella expertly screws up a hunk and lands it right in its beak. She claps her hands.

BELLA

Bravo, Constance. You are a clever girl, aren't you?

She throws a few more pieces to Constance, then she closes her eyes and throws all the bread in the air whilst screaming at the top of her voice.

BILLY (O.S.)
Bella?

Bella turns to the voice, horrified.

CUT TO:

90 UNDERWATER 90
Lots of ducks' legs paddle frantically.

CUT TO:

91 EXT. PARK - SAME 91

BILLY
Are you okay?

Billy dumps his belongings and sits down on the grass. A storm has just arrived in her world.

BELLA
Yes. Of course. Just letting off some steam.

BILLY
So, what brings you here?

BELLA
I come here every Sunday.

BILLY
To scream and shout and exhale the week?

Bella looks at the ground, then at the ducks.

BELLA
Yes. And to feed old Constance.

BILLY
Constance?

BELLA
(points to the ducks)
The scruffy one with one leg. Always there when I need her.

BILLY
Bet she was a looker in her day.

BELLA
Oh, she was indeed.

Billy pours tea from his Thermos and offers it to Bella.

BILLY
Tea?

BELLA

Thank you.

She cups it gratefully. Billy opens his bag, pulls out a pad and starts to sketch Constance. The ducks have all left the pond and mysteriously gather, contented, around Bella. Billy looks confused. Constance climbs onto Bella's lap.

BILLY

They like you, Miss Dolittle.

Bella tries to divert the attention.

BELLA

Are you here to work?

BILLY

Come to doodle, and think. Always loved it here. Prefer it nice and early though. Not really a fan of a park full of 'people'.

BELLA

Me neither.

BILLY

Surprised I've never seen you before.

BELLA

Maybe you have. Just didn't know my face.

BILLY

Oh no. I'd have remembered you, for sure.

Awkward silence. Bella sees some sketches amongst Billy's mess. They are brightly coloured.

BELLA

They're lovely - your drawings.

BILLY

They're just a means to an end. I invent things. Numbers and working parts, that's my speciality.

(points to his head)

Ideas... they come out faster than I can cope. Constant rumblings. Pure left-brainer.

BELLA

I'm more of a no-brainer.

Billy thinks this is ridiculous. He's in awe of her.

BILLY

But you know so much - every book, every author, every shelf. You're amazing.

BELLA
I'm just working there until I get my
book published.

BILLY
How exciting. What's it about?

BELLA
Well, it's a children's book, but it's
not completely... what I mean is, it's
not, well... it hasn't really got an
actual story at the moment.

BILLY
Oh. How novel.

Bella is more uncomfortable than ever.

BELLA
I like your mechanical bird thing.

Billy is dumbfounded.

BILLY
How do you know about that?

BELLA
In the library the other day. You left a
piece of paper.

BILLY
Oh right. I see. Yes. My bird thing.
Indeed.

Bella finishes her tea and starts to collect her stuff.

BELLA
I really ought to get moving, lots to do.

BILLY
Want to see it? My bird? I only live a
few minutes away.

BELLA
Well...I really should get...

BILLY
Oh don't give me that old "I really
should get". No one else has seen it yet.
No one's been asked.

BELLA
But I really must get back to my gard../

BILLY
It would be rude to say no.

BELLA

Well I suppose maybe I could...

BILLY

Brilliant! You've seen the scribbles, now you can meet the real thing.

He hands her a pair of old leather-strapped goggles.

BELLA

What are these for?

91A EXT. ROAD - DAY

91A

Bella is nervously grinning as she sits huddled in Billy's rickety antique motorbike's sidecar. He smiles at her, oblivious to the danger as they speed down the road. He gives her the thumbs up.

Bella tries her best to return the gesture convincingly.

91B EXT. OLD WAREHOUSE - DAY

91B

They pull up outside the front door. Billy switches off the engine. Bella is both shaken and stirred. She looks up to the old Victorian warehouse - it's seen better days.

BILLY

Welcome to my humble abode.

92-3 OMITTED

92-3

94 INT. BILLY'S WAREHOUSE/HOME - DAY

94

As they step into Billy's warehouse/workshop/home Bella almost recoils from the dusty, oily mess. Billy is enormously proud of his extraordinary space, the whole roof of which is a giant skylight, like an antiquated artist's studio. The space is full of mechanical endeavour. Animals and contraptions litter the floor. Long tabletops are covered in plans and tools. Bella is enthralled.

BILLY

When my parents died, they left George the town house, Edward got the cottage, and me, I got this.

BELLA

How disappointing.

BILLY

I know. The others were livid. Part of the joys of being the eldest - I got first pick.

BELLA

What do they do, your brothers?

BILLY

Oh. George is a poet, at least he was when I saw him last week. And Edward, he's the black sheep - became a lawyer - broke my mother's heart.

Billy picks up what looks like the controls to an old model plane. He flicks a switch and a large metal tortoise scuttles across the floor Bella squeaks involuntarily with surprise.

The tortoise runs straight into a pile of metal tubes and panels. Bella smiles. She seems to be forgetting that this is undoubtedly the messiest place she's ever been.

BILLY (CONT'D)

He's called Serges. Body of a tortoise, engine of a hare. And now for the main act.

Billy fires up the remote control again and we hear a stirring sound from a balcony walkway above.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Come to me, Luna.

We hear wings flap. Seemingly from nowhere, a magically real and exquisite metal bird swoops down into the space.

Billy wrestles with the controls. As he gains in confidence, this near-perfect creation soars and dives around the vast room, often missing Bella by inches. The party piece is completed when Billy guides the bird into his own arms. They crumple into a heap. Bella has never laughed like this in her life and relishes the simple pleasure of being with Billy. She radiates a glow we haven't seen before.

BILLY (CONT'D)

He's powered by light.

BELLA

Solar-powered?

BILLY

Even moonlight.

BELLA

Hence Luna?

BILLY

Hence Luna.

BELLA

How magical.

Billy makes Luna perform the most amazing aerobatics. Bella screams with delight.

BELLA (CONT'D)

I love him!

BILLY

I'm very glad to hear it. Tell me a story about Luna, Bella.

Bella thinks for a long while.

BELLA

Luna couldn't always fly you know?

BILLY

Really? Tell all...

BELLA

Well, long ago, before the world was round, Luna and the rest of her species inhabited a remote forest. They had tiny little wings, but they were flightless. They foraged on the forest floor and kept themselves very much to themselves. Luna lost her parents at a very early age - they both disappeared when they strayed out of the forest to look for more food and never came back. They were taken from Luna, just like that, with no explanation. Barely out of the nest, she was too young to know anything. She was such a worrier, only coming out for food briefly when all the other animals had gone to sleep and the forest was bathed in moonlight. She was a scrawny little thing. A loner. Well, life was just passing by, until the day Luna saw a kindly traveller holding a thing of great wonder and beauty..... and and ...

Bella's story just grinds to a halt. Billy laughs as he controls the bird.

BILLY

And? What?

BELLA

And..... that's all... for now.

BILLY

That's it! I want to know what happens to Luna.

BELLA

So do I.

97 EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN - LATER

97

Bella is lying exhausted in the garden, eyes shut.

A brogue-covered foot kicks Bella gently.

BELLA

Are you kicking me, Mr Stephenson?

ALFIE

No. I'm encouraging you to get up. If you ignore my encouragement, then I'll start kicking you.

Bella sits up.

BELLA

This garden is taking forever.

ALFIE

Everything that matters takes time, Bella. You may be able to speed-read but you can't speed-garden. Michelangelo didn't subcontract painting the Sistine Chapel to bring it in on schedule. Even God took it easy on the seventh day.

(beat)

All in good time, Bella.

Something catches Alfie's eye and he wanders over to it - a PLANT that has grown between the cracks in a paving stone that has been uncovered by the cleaning. He kneels to examine it up close. Bella comes to join him.

BELLA

What's that?

Alfie, for the first time, is positively glowing.

ALFIE

I do believe that it is *Fragaria Virginiana*, the wild strawberry. You see Bella, nature, life, is just waiting to burst out anywhere it can. Seeking out the light. Just getting on with it. Simple.

BELLA

It must have been buried under a ton of rubbish.

ALFIE

Isn't that always the way?

Bella stares at the plant, contemplating what Alfie has said.

98 OMITTED

98

99 INT. BELLA'S KITCHEN. NIGHT - LATER

99

Bella is finishing off her design for the garden. Vernon is baking. We can hear the news in Welsh in the background.

BELLA

He was really inspirational to be around today. Cranky, but inspirational.

VERNON

He wasn't always the way he is. Don't get me wrong, he wasn't ever Santa Claus, but he was kind. He was a good friend to me, when Bethan became ill - he had a way of seeing things that helped me make some sense of it all.

BELLA

So what changed him?

VERNON

Dunno.

(beat)

He became a nasty, spitting sack of venom!

BELLA

But the way he was this afternoon...

VERNON

You got him on his favourite subject.

He thinks for a few seconds and then leaps up with a start and suddenly makes a beeline for the oven.

VERNON (CONT'D)

My macaroons!

As Vernon flaps, Bella thinks about Alfie.

100 EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN - DAY

100

Bella and Alfie stand in the centre of the garden where Bella has pegged out a kidney-shaped space for a pond. They both stand there staring at the space. Behind him we see Vernon pegging out a line of pink washing.

ALFIE

I should have warned you, laundry's not Vernon's strong point.

(he pulls out a pink hankie)

I have something for you.

He leans forward and pins a Peony in Bella's black ensemble.

ALFIE (CONT'D)

Queen Victoria wore black less than you.
Always feel I'm at a funeral when you're
around.

BELLA

Charming.

VERNON

(sneezing, of course)
Tea anyone?

They both nod.

ALFIE

(Looking at the chalked ground)
Have you really given this enough
thought?

Bella reaches into her pockets and pulls out an extensive set
of plans.

BELLA

It should get around eight hours'
sunlight a day. I've given it a minimum
depth of two feet for the lilies and a
one foot overhang all the way around.
It's going to be lined with both plastic
and concrete and the pump and filter will
be further up the garden to increase the
water table. Vernon's going to help me
with that.

ALFIE

What's he going to do, cover it in puff
pastry?

Bella starts to dig. When she isn't looking, Alfie smiles as
he looks around.

BELLA

How quickly do you think we can put the
fish in?

ALFIE

Personally, I'd wait until there's water
in it.

BELLA

But approximately how soon?

ALFIE

Miss Brown?

BELLA

Yes.

ALFIE
Just dig.

101 INT. ALFIE'S HOUSE - MORNING 101

We hear a bell ring twice. Milly scuttles off to get breakfast from the hatch as Alfie rubs his hands together. Milly lays the plate in front of him and stands back as he surveys it with glee.

102 OMITTED 102

102A INT. BELLA'S KITCHEN - MORNING 102A

The food hatch flies open, scaring Vernon half to death.

ALFIE (O.S.)
No black pudding with my breakfast today,
Welshman?

Vernon gathers himself, looks through to see Alfie holding the hatch open with his cane.

VERNON
No. You got a problem with my cooking?

ALFIE
No. When I've got a problem, you'll know.

VERNON
So you haven't got a problem?

ALFIE
No.

VERNON
Good.

ALFIE
Fine.

VERNON
Yeah, fine.

Vernon pokes Alfie's cane, and the hatch clams shut.

103 EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN - LATER 103

Bella is still digging out the pond.

Alfie sits on a garden chair next to the hole drinking his coffee.

BELLA
Mr. Stephenson?

ALFIE
Yes?

BELLA
Can I ask you a personal question?

ALFIE
No.

BELLA
Please.

ALFIE
No.

BELLA
Ask me one then.

ALFIE
Definitely not.

BELLA
Why not?

ALFIE
Because I certainly don't want to have to
prod around in your obsessive little
world any more than I absolutely have to.
Now dig.

BELLA
I'm speechless.

ALFIE
If only that were true.

He looks at her, and with a flick of the finger tells her to
resume digging.

104 INT. LIBRARY - DAY

104

We see Billy and Bella talking in the library through a
strange circular vignette until we reveal that Bramble is, in
fact, spying on them through the hole in a Jammie Dodger
biscuit.

105 INT. BELLA'S KITCHEN - MORNING

105

Bella tucks into her breakfast - which includes black
pudding. She reads a book on South American folklore.

We hear a knocking on the serving hatch. Vernon opens the
hatch to face Milly. He gets a waft of alcohol fumes for his
trouble.

VERNON
Lord, it's breakfast of champions for
you, is it, Milly?

MILLY

His lordship would like to know if there is any black pudding? You know it's his favourite.

VERNON

Tell him they were clean out.

Milly can see Bella eating some, and looks confused. Vernon clocks this and in a resigned and low voice.

VERNON (CONT'D)

(whispers)

Dreadful for his cholesterol. But don't you dare tell him I said that.

Milly taps her finger on her nose and nods. She closes the hatch with difficulty.

106 EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN - LATER

106

Bella's digging. Alfie's pruning a bush on a step ladder on the other side of the fence. The hole is nearly finished.

BELLA

...because ever since I was a kid that's all I've had really. My drawings. The only thing I've ever wanted is to write a children's book.

ALFIE

Why are you telling me this again?

BELLA

My point is, that there's nothing up here...

(she taps her head)

...nothing that makes any sense.

ALFIE

The curse of the fairer sex.

Bella stops digging. Alfie sees he has hurt her feelings.

ALFIE (CONT'D)

Bella, if you go in search for inspiration it will be a fruitless journey. You can't just knock on the door of the subconscious mind and ask it to come up with gold. Look out of the windows Bella, it's all around you. Your library is like a garden.

BELLA

How so?

ALFIE

Think about it. It's full of inspiration. Mighty oaks like Hans Christian Andersen and Wilde, new authors who are tender saplings and budding flowers that bloom every time we read them. Stories getting better and stronger every time they are told. The library is a land of tales, fertile ground for your imagination. Cultivate it and, in time, you will find your tale.

Bella looks at Alfie, awestruck.

ALFIE (CONT'D)

Now shut up and dig.

BELLA

Can't.

ALFIE

Why not?

BELLA

Digging's done.

Bella smiles and climbs out of the hole.

ALFIE

Well?

BELLA

What?

ALFIE

Aren't you going to thank me for all my hard work?

Bella looks puzzled.

DISSOLVE TO:

107 EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN - LATER.

107

Alfie and Bella are in the same position, only now the pond has lilies floating in it.

BELLA

Can I ask you that question now, Mr Stephenson?

ALFIE

Call me 'Alfie'.

BELLA

Can I, Alfie?

ALFIE
No.

BELLA
Go on.

ALFIE
If I say yes, will you leave me in peace?

BELLA
It's much more likely, yes.

ALFIE
What kind of answer is that? Are you a
writer or a lawyer?

BELLA
Please, Alfie. Just one question.

ALFIE
Shoot, one - quick, quick.

BELLA
What's your favourite flower?

ALFIE
That's your personal question?

BELLA
Well the only thing you care about is
nature, so I thought this is the most
personal thing I could ask.

Alfie smiles in spite of himself. His brow furrows with
concentration.

BELLA (CONT'D)
Are you thinking, or ignoring me?

ALFIE
I'm thinking.

BELLA
Good.
(Alfie glares)
Sorry.

Alfie starts to say something and then thinks the better of
it. His face lights up as he seems to have chosen one and
then falls again as he changes his mind. Then...

ALFIE
Tigrinium Splendens... the tiger lily to
you.

BELLA
Why?

ALFIE
That's a second question - we had a one
question deal.

Her look tells him he's pushing his luck.

ALFIE (CONT'D)
Okay, okay. The tiger lily is a dazzling
creation. Great big orange flowers in the
late August sun. You can smell it from
miles away, but God you have to work at
them. So sensitive to soil, light, and
most of all the company they keep. It
always seems like a miracle when you see
one in full flower. They grow alone, not
like a thousand tulips that all pop up
together. No, the tiger lily disobeys all
the rules, does its own thing... and you
always find them where you least expect.
For something that appears so weak, so
vulnerable, they're tough little
bleeders.

Alfie stares at Bella for a moment and then smiles.

ALFIE (CONT'D)
Milly. MILLY!

Milly hurries into the garden mumbling drunkenly as usual.

ALFIE (CONT'D)
Miss Brown will be joining us for tea.

BELLA
I will?

Alfie turns and walks back to his house.

ALFIE
You will.

108 INT. ALFIE'S HOUSE. UPSTAIRS - LATER

108

Bella and Alfie walk up the stairs into an extraordinary
glass hot house that seems way too large for the building
itself. It is full of exotic flowers. It takes Bella's breath
away. The sprinklers come on and a fine mist sprays the
blooms.

ALFIE
Over here.

Alfie leads her over to the corner. There they look down at
the wonderful TIGER LILIES.

BELLA
This is beautiful... fantastic...

ALFIE

When I was younger, I travelled the world. Collected seeds of the most spectacular plants along the way.

Alfie wanders around and looks at the flowers, lost in the memories they evoke. We've never seen him so happy.

ALFIE (CONT'D)

Each one comes from a different country. A different smell, a different colour, and most importantly, a different memory. Each one unique. All of them stories, from beginning to end. And the strange thing Bella is that I spend my days breathing life into these wonderful things. They need special attention and care. I propagate their very being.

Bella kneels and looks at a ravishing, delicate RED POPPY.

BELLA

Where is this from?

ALFIE

Iran. I found it in the mountains overlooking the Caspian Sea.

BELLA

Will you tell me about it?

It seems like he hasn't heard her, as he wanders over to a pruning table at the side of the room and opens the drawer.

He returns and hands her a weathered but expensive watercolour kit, and a pad of high grade paper.

Bella opens the box of paints.

ALFIE

They are a little old but of fine quality. Please do them justice.

BELLA

But I don't know what to .../

As he sits into an old plush armchair, he wags his finger as before.

ALFIE

Don't think. Just do.
(beat)
Now, where was I?

BELLA

Iran.

Alfie launches into his story.

ALFIE

Ah yes. In the province of Mazandaran, on the southern shore of the Caspian Sea.

BELLA

Which is, in fact, the world's biggest lake.

Alfie gives her the school-marm slow blink.

ALFIE

And that will be the last interruption from you, young lady.

Bella nods quietly.

ALFIE (CONT'D)

I walked through a field that seemed to go on forever, as the merciless sun rose in the sky.

Bella starts to paint.

ALFIE (CONT'D)

I bathed in the Caspian Sea in perfect, perfect silence - didn't see another human for seven days. All around me was a blanket of deep red poppies. But let me go back. It was July when I arrived in Tehran and hot as hell. It was so grand in those days. I was struck down by its beauty. The first night I was due to have dinner with the British Ambassador and...

109 INT. BELLA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

109

Bella is working on another painting. The twins are watching Welsh TV.

VERNON

I can't believe it. That doesn't make any sense.

BELLA

It was like a tropical paradise.

VERNON

Five years I worked there and he never let me look inside.

Bella is engrossed in her painting.

VERNON (CONT'D)

This is it, see, treating me like that is the reason I left.

BELLA

You should see his face light up when he's telling his stories ... and what amazing stories they are!

VERNON

I've always wondered what's in that stupid wrinkly old head. I'm jealous Bella, you got to have a peek inside.

Bella shrugs.

VERNON (CONT'D)

Tell me again what it looked like.

BELLA

I can do better than that.

Bella takes out a pad filled with all of the paintings that she's done of Alfie's hothouse and the poppy fields of Iran, which Vernon points at. The twins have wandered over to the table and gaze at the paintings.

VERNON

Bloody hell. Where's this?

BELLA

On the Southern shore of The Caspian Sea...

AMY

which isn't a sea at all - it's the biggest lake in the world.

Bella smiles in agreement. She is every bit as animated as Alfie. In the background we can see all the reference material she has now collected including her most recent sketches from Alfie's. In one sketch, Luna flies high over the poppy fields of Iran. The twins sit rapt as she tells the story.

110 INT. LIBRARY - DAY

110

Bella finds beautiful Viking drawings in a book.

Billy smiles at her from a distant table where he is surrounded by books and sketch pads. He lifts an enormous sandwich to his mouth, winking at Bella whilst doing so. Bella cannot suppress a laugh. She coyly smiles back, then decides to bring the book to Billy.

But before Bella reaches Billy, Bramble sneaks up on him like a lion stalking its prey. He is caught red-handed, sandwich in mouth.

Bella turns on her heel and returns to the counter.

MISS BRAMBLE
This is disgraceful!

BILLY
I'm sorry, how very rude.

He proffers her some of his lunch.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Ham and piccalilli? Delicious.

MISS BRAMBLE
I don't want your sandwich!

BILLY
Pickled egg?

MISS BRAMBLE
Gather your things and get out.

Billy starts to gather his stuff.

MISS BRAMBLE (CONT'D)
You can leave the books there.

Bramble looks back towards Bella who is trying to hide her worry, as she busies herself with some book stamping.

MISS BRAMBLE (CONT'D)
Don't think I can't see what's going on between you two. It's disgusting! Do you understand?

Bella looks startled. Billy wanders past on his way out.

BILLY
You were so right about Lampana's work. Inspiring stuff! Especially the bird illustrations.

MISS BRAMBLE
OUT!

Bramble is pointing at the door. Bella blushes once again. Billy leaves, making his usual din. The library returns to deathly quiet, as Bella watches the door swing shut. Bella stamps a book hard, allowing herself an unseen glare at Bramble.

111 EXT. LIBRARY - EVENING

111

An old key turns in an old keyhole. A forlorn Bella locks the doors, leaves the library and sets off down the road.

BILLY (O.S.)
Bella.

Bella stops in her tracks and turns to face Billy. She nervously looks around for Bramble.

BILLY (CONT'D)

It's okay, she left a few minutes ago.

BELLA

She'd have my guts for garters if she saw me talking to you. I'm living on borrowed time as it is.

BILLY

I just wanted to say thank you for all your help and sorry for causing you trouble with the old windbag.

BELLA

It's a pity you got chucked out when you did. I'd found some fantastic Viking drawings of all kinds of things which I thought would be great inspiration for Luna.

BILLY

You can show me now...

BELLA

Oh no, the library's closed for the night, and Miss Bramble said you're barred - for life.

He looks at the big bunch of keys in her hand.

BELLA (CONT'D)

Oh no, no way... I couldn't possibly... fraternizing with the enemy is bad enough, but there's just no way I could... no I... what are you smiling at?

Billy is just smiling - she's gorgeous when she's nervous.

112 INT. LIBRARY - LATER

112

Bella flicks on a few switches.

BELLA

I've never done this before.

He's grinning like a Cheshire cat.

BILLY

I can tell.

CUT TO:

The lights of the library are dim but Bella stands centre stage as Billy looks on in delight, munching his way through a plate of Bramble's biscuits. Billy's eyes are wide. Bella holds up pictures of Luna.

BELLA

Mesmerised, Luna asked the traveller where he had got the beautiful flower. "There are many" the traveller said. "From the top of the mountain you can see thousands - a sea of petals. It will make your heart sing, for it is a magical sight". "But how can I get to the top of the mountain? I can't fly and I only come out at night. I would starve".

Books of all descriptions lie open everywhere.

BELLA (CONT'D)

The traveller had heard this before. "If you want to see them enough, it will happen". Before leaving, he took from his pocket a small orange fruit and handed it to Luna. "This fruit will give you strength but you will only find hope outside the forest. Seek it and the path will lead you to the tallest mountain in the land, and the home of the rarest flower in the world". Luna was scared and excited in equal measure. She went back to her nocturnal foraging but couldn't help thinking of the beautiful red poppy.

As Bella recounts and Billy bathes in the warmth of her company, we float around the library, and as we swoop through the bookshelves, the characters and images Bella is imagining come to life and burst from the old books as vibrant living drawings, playing in this newfound world of ideas. [Note - see Director's Vision.]

BELLA (CONT'D)

Then one night, all alone in the forest, she walked and walked until the sun came up. Tired, hungry and scared, she took refuge under a twisted tree. She was utterly lost. Then she remembered the orange fruit. She devoured it in seconds, and hope filled her small heart.

Billy stands up and claps. Around the empty library, we hear the CLAPPING of thousands of authors.

Bella loses herself for a moment in Billy's eyes.

BELLA (CONT'D)

And so, replenished and filled with purpose, her journey continued.

But when Luna saw the mountain soaring into the clouds her heart sank. Then a voice boomed out: "You seek the rarest flower?" She turned to face the leering figure of the Sage. His hollow voice frightened her. But Luna summoned a voice from within that she never knew she possessed. "I think I will find my mother and father there". The Sage laughed "You have much to learn child. Are you sure you want to continue this perilous quest?"

And she stops...

BILLY
More, tell me more?

BELLA
I don't know what's next.

BILLY
But I want to know the ending.

Bella playfully teases him.

BELLA
All good things come to those who wait.

BILLY
Will you have tea with me tomorrow, after work?

Bella takes a bow, retreats a little into her shell, but not before answering:

BELLA
Yes. Please. That would be lovely.

Billy can't help himself - he leans in and kisses Bella. Then they both stand quite still.

BILLY
Until tomorrow, Bella Brown, under the weeping willow in the park at 6 o'clock?

Bella nods. He leaves. Bella is elated.

CUT TO:

113 INT. BELLA'S FLAT - MORNING

113

Bella is asleep at her desk.

Vernon walks over with a cup of tea in his hand. He's about to put it onto the desk and wake her up when he stops and stares at her sketch pad in wonder.

On it are a series of lovely drawings. The tiger lily, the strawberry plant, Alfie in his tassled skullcap and Billy's mechanical bird.

Vernon gently wakes Bella.

BELLA
(Still half asleep)
Billy?

VERNON
No, it's Vernon.

BELLA
Oh. What time is it?

VERNON
Eight thirty.

Bella jumps out of her seat and rushes to get ready.

BELLA
Oh no, I've got to be at work at nine.

VERNON
You're cutting it a bit fine, pet.
(beat)
So he's got a name then, eh? Billy.

She runs into her room.

BELLA
He's wonderful Vernon.

VERNON
Wonderful, you say. And what does Mr.
Wonderful do then?

BELLA
He invents mechanical animals.

VERNON
(rolling his eyes)
Great. Just as long as he's got
prospects.

CUT TO:

114 EXT. BELLA'S FLAT - LATER

114

Bella grabs her coat as she runs down the hallway and out the door.

BELLA
See you later.

She halfheartedly pulls the door behind her, but it doesn't fully close.

Vernon notices this and smiles as he locks the door.

CUT TO:

115 INT. LIBRARY - DAY

115

Bella runs in smiling from ear to ear. She sneaks up to the desk, thinking she's got away with it. The clock reads 9.15. Then her face changes to dread. We see the empty plate of Viscount biscuits and crumbs. Miss Bramble has rumbled her. We hear a loud throat-clearing and see Bramble in her office.

Bramble smiles at Bella as she slowly raises a sign. "YOU ARE FRIED". Bella looks bemused. Bramble checks the sign, muttering to herself, and corrects the spelling to "FIRED".

116 EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN - LATER

116

We see the strawberry plant on the patio. The paving stones around it have been removed and it has flourished in its new-found freedom.

Bella is staring at the reflection of the sky in the pond. Alfie's reflection arrives.

ALFIE

You hated working there.

BELLA

A bad job is better than no job. I am a woman of extraordinarily limited means.

ALFIE

Come on, toughen up. If life throws lemons at you, just pick up the lemons and throw them back, maybe lob a few bricks too.

Alfie transparently attempts uncharacteristic optimism.

ALFIE (CONT'D)

You'll be able to spend more time drawing and writing.

BELLA

Yes, and less time eating and paying rent.

(beat)

Wait here.

Bella runs into the house and returns with a framed picture. She hands it to Alfie. It's a painting of Alfie cupping an orchid in his hands. Alfie stares at the painting for a long time. When he looks up, Bella is shocked to see he is upset.

ALFIE

Why did you paint this?

BELLA

I don't know. I just thought you'd like it. I didn't mean to upset you.

ALFIE

Well you did. Go and find a job. Unemployment doesn't suit you.

Alfie turns and leaves. Bella doesn't know what to say.

CUT TO:

117 EXT. BANDSTAND - SUNSET

117

Bella walks to the Weeping Willow, underneath her arm is a watercolour sketch and her handwritten story of Luna. She nervously waits for Billy as people come and go for what seems like an age. She waits and waits.

CUT TO:

One hour later... No sign of Billy. In the background we hear a clock strike 7 o'clock. Bella leaves.

118 EXT. BILLY'S WAREHOUSE - SUNSET

118

Bella is nearing Billy's warehouse when she hears loud laughter. On the other side of the road she sees an immaculately-dressed Billy with his arm around a pretty YOUNG WOMAN, both seemingly very happy together.

Bella is devastated. As soon as she can get her feet to move, she flees.

119 INT. BELLA'S FLAT - DAY

119

Bella is in bed, wrapped in her quilts, she's been crying. Vernon walks to Bella's bedroom door with a cup tea in his hand. He bangs on the door.

VERNON

Come on Bella, wakey, wakey.

There's no answer. Vernon bangs louder.

VERNON (CONT'D)

Bella! It's 10 o'clock. It's a beautiful day outside.

There's still no answer, slightly concerned now, Vernon tries to open the door.

VERNON (CONT'D)

I hope you're decent...

The door is locked. He starts to bang again when from inside we hear:

BELLA (O.S.)
I'm not feeling well.

VERNON
Do you want me to...

BELLA
LEAVE ME ALONE. PLEASE.

Concerned Vernon turns and goes back into the kitchen. He sees many crumpled drawings that have been obliterated by manic scribbling.

120 INT. BELLA'S KITCHEN. LATER

120

Vernon puts the food in the hatch and rings the bell twice. He waits until Milly opens the hatch, drunk as usual.

All of a sudden, Alfie is there. They are face to face across the hatch.

ALFIE
Ahhh, my son. How long is it since your last confession?

VERNON
Bella's ill.

ALFIE
What's wrong with her?

VERNON
I don't know.

ALFIE
What do you mean, you don't know? Is it losing the job that's got to her? She needs to snap out of it and move on.

VERNON
I'll be sure to pass on your words of sympathy and support.

Vernon closes the hatch.

121 INT. BELLA'S FLAT - AFTERNOON

121

Vernon knocks on Bella's door again.

VERNON
If you don't let me in I'm going to...
(to himself)
What am I going to do?
(beat)
If you don't let me in I'm going to...
MAKE SUCH A MESS, YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE IT!

He runs off and quickly returns with heavy but pristine boots. He stamps loudly next to Bella's door.

VERNON (CONT'D)
You wouldn't believe what's on these boots. Filthy. Oh, that stinks....Ohhh, that's horrible!

There's no response. He runs off again and returns holding a danish pastry, waving it past the lock.

VERNON (CONT'D)
Smell that, Bella. Maple Pecan. Flaky crumbs are going to go everywhere. I swear to God, if you don't come out I'm going to eat it without a plate underneath. Do you understand? I'm going to create a flaky crumb avalanche!

He pretends to do this but holds a plate very carefully underneath it.

VERNON (CONT'D)
You can't say I didn't warn you.

He takes a bite, then another.

VERNON (CONT'D)
(to himself)
My god, this is delicious! Light, not too sweet. Vernon, you're not bad son, not bad at all.

Vernon sits and finishes the pastry, totally forgetting his 'wake Bella' mission.

CUT TO:

122 INT. BELLA'S FLAT - EVENING

122

Vernon places a glass of water outside Bella's door.

VERNON
I've got to collect the girls. I've left you a glass of water. Please drink it, or you'll get dehydrated.

Vernon listens. He can hear the faint sound of Bella crying inside. He shakes his head and leaves.

CUT TO:

123 INT. BELLA'S KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

123

Vernon faces Alfie through the hatch, the plate of breakfast between them.

ALFIE
How's the patient?

VERNON
It's more than medicine can fix, unless
you've got something for a broken heart.
Coming on top of the job and that...

ALFIE
She needs someone to be firm with her...?

VERNON
Gently does it, I think?

ALFIE
(Nods)
Of course.

There is a silence between them. Vernon wants Alfie to help
but is too proud to ask. Alfie wants to help but is too proud
to offer.

VERNON
Well, see you later then.

Vernon shuts the hatch. Alfie finally cracks...

ALFIE (O.S.)
(shouting through the hatch)
I could talk to her if you think it would
help...

Vernon opens the hatch and nods.

124 INT. BELLA'S BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

124

Bella is sobbing into her pillow. There is a loud BANG on the
door.

BELLA
Vernon, leave me alone.

ALFIE (O.S.)
Bella, OPEN THIS BLOODY DOOR.

Bella sits up.

ALFIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
DON'T MAKE ME ASK YOU AGAIN, YOUNG LADY.

Bella opens the door. Alfie is holding a Moth Orchid, which
he hands to her.

ALFIE (CONT'D)
Christ, you're a mess!

VERNON
Alfie!

ALFIE

Could you give us a couple of minutes,
Vernon. Maybe you could rustle up some of
that non-existent black pudding that I
saw in the kitchen just now.

Vernon is caught off guard.

VERNON

Right then.

Alfie steps inside the bedroom and closes the door.

ALFIE

Ask me a personal question. Anything you
like.

Bella looks at him warily.

BELLA

Anything?

Alfie nods.

BELLA (CONT'D)

Why did my painting upset you?

Alfie sighs.

BELLA (CONT'D)

Who was it?

ALFIE

It was the most wonderful, wonderful
woman. I met her in Biarritz. She was
travelling alone, which was unheard of in
those days. Such a free spirit. Said I
was a stuffed shirt. She drank like a
fish and had the most contagious laugh.

BELLA

You fell in love?

ALFIE

In about twenty minutes. Took her a bit
longer.

BELLA

Were you happy together?

ALFIE

Happy as two people can be, I think. She
well and truly unstuffed the shirt. We
travelled everywhere, shared everything.

BELLA

Tell me more.

Alfie sees the Harold Truscott Mildmay book on Bella's bedside table.

ALFIE

She was a horticulturist. The best.

The penny drops.

BELLA

She wrote the book?

ALFIE

Yes. She thought Harold Truscott Mildmay sounded rather more scholarly than 'Rose Milton'. You see, no one would have published a female horticulturist in those days. She fought like hell for it, Bella. She was a bright spark, and when she believed in something she gave it all she had.

BELLA

So...

ALFIE

So it upsets me greatly to see you lie here withering on the vine. You all wonder what happened to turn me into such a wretched old bugger?

BELLA

I wasn't going to...

ALFIE

She showed me how to live. Then she died quite suddenly in labour, many years ago. No warning. Just gone. Both of them.

(beat)

I'm well aware that I'm not that good with people. I'm not proud of what's left.

Bella is touched by his honesty.

ALFIE (CONT'D)

Rose had passion for life and I can see the seeds of it in you. So grasp the nettle. Stop being sorry for being here, you stupid girl.

Bella reaches across, holds Alfie's hand. He smiles.

BELLA

You're right - I am stupid. Stupid enough to fall for a liar and a cheat. I actually thought he cared.

ALFIE
... does he know I was Commonwealth gold
medalist in Clay Pigeon shooting?

Bella is confused by the unexpected segue.

ALFIE (CONT'D)
This young man Vernon's talking about,
the robot builder - looks like we may
have to have him shot!

Bella smiles through her drying tears.

125 INT. BELLA'S FLAT. KITCHEN - LATER

125

Alfie and Vernon are tucking into their second breakfasts,
black pudding included. Vernon is watching Welsh TV as usual.

VERNON
Bella told me you showed her that secret
garden you got upstairs.

ALFIE
Did she?

VERNON
How come you never let me see it?

ALFIE
You never asked.

Vernon is skeptical, but takes a shot.

VERNON
Could I possibly..?

ALFIE
(interrupting) Don't be ridiculous.

Vernon is kicking himself for falling for it.

ALFIE (CONT'D)
That's that sorted. Pass the mustard.

Bella walks into the kitchen. She's showered and dressed. She
sweeps all her Billy drawings and origami ducks into a box.

126 EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN - LATER

126

Bella sets the box into a brazier and puts a match to it. She
sits exhausted as the sun goes down.

CUT TO:

127 INT. BELLA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 127

A violent storm wakes Bella. She turns on her duck lamp but we can't hear the QUACKING for the enormous wind outside. She quickly dresses.

128 INT. BELLA'S FLAT -SAME 128

The windows are rattling. As she heads to the back door, a window is slammed shut by the wind. We see the drawings, Polaroids and Billy's things scatter around the room. Bella hesitates but instead of clearing things up she opens the back door, which nearly comes clean off its hinges. She leans into the storm and battles into her garden.

129 EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN - SAME 129

The rain is horizontal and Bella fights to stay on her feet as she starts to survey the carnage the tempest has wrought. Saplings and new blooms are being ripped away by the wind as Bella tries desperately to save her garden. Her hair is matted to her head and the rain stings her eyes.

130 INT. ALFIE'S HOUSE - SAME 130

Alfie sees her from an upstairs window. He turns to leave.

131 EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN - SAME 131

Bella returns from the house with an empty glass jar. She can hardly stand as she battles across the garden lashed by the wind and rain. In the corner, the potting shed topples over.

132 EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN - SAME 132

Alfie enters the garden and catches sight of Bella struggling with the jar. Bella finds the strawberry plant and places the jar over it with great difficulty. She hangs on for dear life as all around her is blown away. Alfie grabs her. They're barely audible as the wind HOWLS.

ALFIE
Leave it!

BELLA
What?!

ALFIE
Let it go, Bella.

BELLA
But we worked so hard...

Alfie is shaking his head. She realises he's speaking from experience.

CUT TO:

133 OMITTED 133

134 EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN - MORNING 134

Birds are singing as the rays of the rising sun stripe the wrecked garden. Bella surveys the destruction. She lifts the glass jar off the strawberry plant.

135 INT. BELLA'S FLAT - MORNING 135

Two pairs of muddy Wellington boots enter the house. A muddy Bella and a very muddy Alfie appear in front of and Vernon who is cooking breakfast. Bella's collection of illustrations is dishevelled but back in place.

ALFIE

As I told you before, in some parts of the world they celebrate when it rains. We think it would be healthy to celebrate this little storm too.

BELLA

Celebrate? Alfie, the garden's ruined. I'm ruined.

ALFIE

No Bella, it's been the making of you. The trees might have blown down and the windows blown out, but you saved the one thing that needed saving, my dear. But enough of that, we think you should take the day off.

VERNON

Our treat.

BELLA

I'm not exactly in the mood.

VERNON

We thought it would be a good idea if you spent the day pampering yourself, go out somewhere special tonight, cheer yourself up.

ALFIE

Get a manicure, a facial, you know, lady's stuff.

She's a little hurt by this, so Alfie tries a little tact.

ALFIE (CONT'D)

You're a mess my dear, so hurry up and get yourself together. Something with a dash of colour would be nice.

BELLA

You're both mad.

VERNON
Those in glass houses, Bella...

ALFIE
Good, that's settled then. Off you go. I believe Milly has the details. She will escort you - please try and keep her upright.

136 INT. SALON - DAY

136

Bella looks slightly out of place under the dome hair-drier. She reads, trying to be inconspicuous. A silver hip-flask hits the patterned tiled floor. We now see Milly, snoring under her hair-drier. Bella is mortified.

137 INT. BAR - EVENING

137

Bella sips her drink, sets it down beside twelve empties that belong to, you guessed it, the snoring, comatose, drooling Milly. A bell rings.

BARMAN (O.S.)
Last orders, please.

And Milly is vertical in a split second.

MILLY
Gin!

138 INT. BELLA'S FLAT - NIGHT

138

Bella arrives home with Milly. She is basically holding Milly upright. Milly is singing. Bella opens the front door and switches on the light, it doesn't work.

She carefully makes her way down the hall and tries a standard lamp in the corner, but this one doesn't work either. Behind her Milly hits the deck in the darkness.

139 INT. BELLA'S FLAT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

139

Bella steps into the living room with a lit candle.

BELLA
Vernon?

She notices that the garden door has been covered by thick curtains.

Bella walks over and pulls them open.

She is bathed in golden light.

There is a loud POP and Vernon appears, hands her a glass of champagne and leads her out into the garden.

As Bella looks around we understand why she is so stunned, the garden pond has been finished and the couple of trees that remain standing are covered in fairy lights.

A couple of Alfie's rather grand Chinese laquered dressing screens have been erected across a corner of the garden.

There is a table laid with food and Vernon is standing next to it with Rhian and Amy, who have soiled hands and faces.

The Chinese screens fall in a sudden gust of wind, revealing the remains of the potting shed and all manner of detritus. The girls run towards Bella and hug her. They are unable to keep the words in.

AMY

Hi Bella. We've been working all day to get the pond ready for the fish.

RHIAN

They're Koi Carp. They're about a thousand years old.

AMY

Dad said they're older than Alfie, but they're not as slippery.

Alfie looks to Vernon who is a little sheepish.

AMY (CONT'D)

Come and look.

RHIAN

Come and look.

Amy drags Bella over to the pond.

BELLA

They're just beautiful!

Alfie is standing by the pond and he hands the girls a bag of fish food.

ALFIE

Pinch a little bit between your fingers and sprinkle it onto the water. And make sure they don't bite off your fingers.

RHIAN & AMY

(scared)

Ok...

Bella looks into Alfie's eyes, then gives Alfie a hug. He's startled.

BELLA

When was the last time you had a hug?

Now he hugs back.

ALFIE
It's been too long.

Milly wobbles into the garden and spies the drink. Vernon exits the house with a tray of hot food.

VERNON
Let's eat!

Bella takes Alfie's arm and they all sit at the table. The friends toast each other and drink.

CUT TO:

140 EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN - LATER

140

Alfie and Bella are sitting talking. Music plays in the background as Vernon dances with his two daughters in the fairy-lit garden.

BELLA
You didn't need to do this. Thank you.
Again.

ALFIE
The pleasure, Bella Brown, is all mine.
They chink glasses and sit looking at the garden.

BELLA
I'm so honoured you gave me the book now
that I know the story.

ALFIE
(with mock indignation)
I lent it to you. No one owns that book
while I'm still vertical.
(smiles)
When I'm pushing up the daisies, it's all
yours.

BELLA
In that case I don't want it.

Suddenly it starts to rain.

BELLA (CONT'D)
Care to dance, Mr. Stephenson?

ALFIE
Dance? Don't be stupid, it's raining.

BELLA
I know. In some parts of the world they
celebrate when it rains.

Bella and Alfie dance in the rain with brolleys, as Vernon and the girls scurry around in the background clearing all the things away.

CUT TO:

141 INT. LIBRARY - DAY

141

Billy approaches Miss Bramble at the desk. He hobbles on crutches, leg in plaster. Miss Bramble glares at him.

BRAMBLE
You're banned.

BILLY
May I speak to Bella?

Bramble has a Nice biscuit poised above a cup of tea.

BRAMBLE
Miss Brown's employment has been terminated. Now get out.

BILLY
Can you help me get in touch with her?
It's very important.

MISS BRAMBLE
I'm so sorry, 'sir', I would love to help, but I am not at liberty to divulge personal details of employees or ex-employees. Strictly confidential.
(with fake concern)
You just can't be too careful these days.

She dunks her biscuit.

BRAMBLE
Will there be anything else?

Billy looks at the soggy biscuit, taking his time.

BILLY
Em... no....

He goes to leave. As he gets to the door he turns and cups his hands to his mouth.

BILLY (CONT'D)
(at top of his voice)
Nothing at all, you bilious old windbag!

As he turns to leave the library, we hear the unmistakable sound of someone clapping in the wings. Bramble feverishly looks around for the culprit.

Then her soggy biscuit plops into her teacup.

CUT TO:

142 EXT. BELLA'S FLAT - DAY

142

Billy approaches Bella's front door. He has a piece of paper in his hand with her address written on it.

Just when he's about to ring the doorbell a voice says...

LICHFIELD (O.S.)

Excuse me.

... as the weasely Lichfield blusters past him rudely, and rings the bell. This does not help Billy's nervousness. Lichfield turns and coldly introduces himself.

LICHFIELD (CONT'D)

Gideon Lichfield, landlord.

(beat)

Miss Brown is popular with the male of the species.

BILLY

Excuse me?

CUT TO:

143 EXT. BELLA'S FLAT - SAME TIME

143

Vernon opens the door and stares at Lichfield and then Billy. Billy sees Bella in the background. Bella YELPS, shakes her head in fury and marches out into the garden.

BILLY

Bella, I need to talk.../

Lichfield looks at some notes on his clipboard.

LICHFIELD

(To Billy, in mock whisper)

Vernon Gwyther, the tenant's boyfriend.

BILLY

What?

Lichfield barges past Vernon and heads to the garden. Billy is left at the open door, confused.

144 I/E. BELLA'S FLAT / GARDEN - SAME TIME

144

Lichfield enters and looks around the garden and the unbelievable transformation.

Lichfield is taking Polaroids.

LICHFIELD

I'm impressed and I'm not ashamed to admit it. Obviously I have received no written request for the insertion of a water feature and the keeping of livestock but I am prepared to overlook that given the professional nature of the work undertaken.

Vernon is pleased and relieved. Between sneezes he tries to get rid of Lichfield.

VERNON

Great. I'm glad it's sorted, all hunky dory.../

Inside, Billy looks for Bella, sees her drawing table, and a picture of The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa pinned to the wall.

Lichfield taps on a calculator.

LICHFIELD

So the only matter outstanding is the rent increase.

VERNON

(to Litchfield)

What are you talking about?

Lichfield hands Vernon the contract.

LICHFIELD

This property would come onto the market for at least fifty percent more than before. If she wants to stay, she'll have to pay an increased figure in line with it's market value. Section 23 of the contract - 'If the tenant, or tenants opt to renew the lease, the tenant, or tenants, is/are duty bound to pay the rent set by the landlord'. Watertight. This is why our legal system is revered around the world. I will forward the necessary paperwork...

Lichfield grins at Vernon.

VERNON

This is her home, you know. She's lost her job, had her heart broken by some gigolo, and now you want to put her on the streets..?

Vernon moves towards Lichfield...

ALFIE (O.S.)
 Before you get your rarebits in a twist,
 Vernon, allow me to talk to Mr.
 Lichfield.

Lichfield turns and looks at Alfie.

LICHFIELD
 What are you doing here?

Alfie beckons Lichfield inside and closes the Patio door behind him.

Vernon watches as Alfie berates Lichfield. He can't hear Alfie, but it's clear Lichfield's getting a tongue-lashing. Alfie indicates for Lichfield to leave and Lichfield slopes off.

Billy pokes his head out the back door.

BILLY
 Excuse me, I'm looking for Bella.

VERNON
 I'm no psychic, but I'm guessing she
 doesn't want to be found right now.

Alfie opens the door and walks over to Vernon.

VERNON (CONT'D)
 Well?

ALFIE
 He shan't be bothering Bella again.

Billy enters the garden and approaches. Vernon and Alfie grin at each other, then their smiles fade and simultaneously they both turn to Billy.

ALFIE (CONT'D)
 Who the hell are you?

BILLY
 I'm Billy. She's not expecting me.
 (smiles nervously)
 I'm a few days late.

Alfie's scowl deepens. Vernon decks Billy and his crutches go flying.

145 INT. BELLA'S FLAT. KITCHEN - SAME TIME

145

Billy is sitting on one side of the table, Vernon and Alfie on the other. Billy holds an old-fashioned ice-bag on his eye as he gets the third degree.

BILLY
Married! Of course I'm not married. Why
does Bella think that?

VERNON
She saw you, you fool. All over some
woman.

ALFIE
You stood the girl up, you weazel!

Billy holds up his broken leg.

BILLY
I told you - I had an accident when I was
supposed to meet her.

VERNON
But that was days ago.

BILLY
I've been in hospital. I couldn't get her
number.

ALFIE
But you got her address.

BILLY
I got it this morning from the Adopt-A-
Duck Society.

Vernon leans close.

VERNON
And you expect us to believe that?

BILLY
Please don't hit me again. I didn't know
she had a boyfriend.

The odd couple look very confused. Vernon's out of questions.

VERNON
I'm not her boyfriend, you numpty.
(with renewed threat)
So why didn't you call her?

ALFIE
He's already answered that, you daft
Celt.

VERNON
I know, I'm trying to catch him out. See
if he changes his answer.

ALFIE
(To Billy)
What are your intentions towards Bella?

BILLY
Intentions? I like her very much...

VERNON
Like her?

BILLY
Yes, very much. I think about her all the time. That's why I asked her to tea. I want to see what happens once we really get to know each other.

Now Billy regains a little confidence.

BILLY (CONT'D)
And I respect that you're a close family, but I'd prefer to tell Bella to her face before you interrogate me any more.

There is suddenly a BOOMING VOICE that we haven't heard before coming from the other side of the serving hatch.

BELLA (O.S.)
William Tranter, you have embarrassed and humiliated me more than I've ever been in my life.

Billy wonders where the voice is coming from.

BELLA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Now please leave before I let Vernon loose on you!

Vernon all but growls at Billy.

They all move closer to the hatch, which is shut. They all speak a little louder to compensate.

ALFIE
Bella, we've had a chat with young Billy. He says that he isn't married, and for what it's worth I believe him.

BELLA
I saw him with a woman, the day we were meant to meet, laughing it up on Park Road. He was holding her hand!

Billy looks confused. He looks down at his crutches.

BILLY
But Bella, I was hit by a bus that day, that's why I wasn't there.

BELLA
I know what I saw.

BILLY
(a sudden realization)
It must have been George.

BELLA
I know your face, Billy. It wasn't your brother. It was you.

BILLY
He's only seven minutes younger, Bella.
We're identical.

Vernon stops and thinks.

VERNON
You're a twin.

BILLY
Triplet actually. All separated by seven whole minutes. He's quite the ladies' man, young George.

BELLA
(to herself)
Oh.

She is suddenly embarrassed and aware of her lack of concern for his injuries.

BILLY
I would never lie to you Bella, I care about you too much.
I was telling your brother and father here...

Alfie and Vernon think this is ridiculous.

BILLY (CONT'D)	ALFIE
I'm not her brother.	I'm not her father.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Please believe me, Bella.

He looks awkwardly at the two men, then speaks again into the hatch.

BILLY (CONT'D)
There is an open air concert in the park tonight...

A pause. No reply.

BILLY (CONT'D)
I'd very much like you to be my guest.

He opens the hatch, peers through.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Bella?

He leans in further.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Bella? Are you there?

BELLA

I'm here.

Billy bumps his head as he turns to follow the voice behind him. Bella is in the kitchen now, beside Vernon and Alfie. Now face to face, neither Bella or Billy knows what to say. Billy rubs his head.

BELLA (CONT'D)

You're a bit accident prone.

BILLY

Only when I'm around you...

BELLA

You'll just have to wear a helmet from now on.

BILLY

It's a small price to pay.

She smiles, and we know all is forgiven.

BILLY (CONT'D)

And the concert?

BELLA

I do have more planting to do...

She looks to Alfie, who shakes his head, smiles.

Turning back to Billy, Bella smiles

BILLY

I'll come and get you at half past six?
And I'll try not to hit any buses on the way.

BELLA

Promise?

BILLY

You have my word.

CUT TO:

146 EXT. PARK - NIGHT

146

Billy and Bella watch the concert on the bandstand from the edge of the pond as the ducks come in to land.

Constance sits with them on a blanket with the perfect picnic. In the background, Alfie and Vernon chat animatedly in deck chairs like a pair of chaperones. Milly snoozes next to them. As the light fades and the music ends, a few simple fireworks explode in the sky. Vernon and Alfie look to the sky, and Billy sees they are distracted. He leans over and kisses Bella - the ducks give a chorus of approval.

147 INT. BILLY'S - LATER

147

Bella shows Billy her elaborate sketches of story scenes for her book and characters like Bramble, Alfie, Vernon and Milly. Billy, in turn has created origami and sketched characters like Constance, Luna and Serges. Billy's phone rings. He hands it to Bella. We see the phone drop from her hand.

CUT TO:

148 EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN - DAY

148

A harsh sun is setting as Bella sits at the table in Alfie's garden next to a forlorn Milly and Billy who can't bear to look at her.

She is wrapped in a black overcoat. She has been crying.

Vernon appears, dressed in a black suit and carrying an OAK SAPLING. He gives Bella a parcel, containing "Harold's" book and a letter. Vernon too is inconsolable as he goes to a spot where a SPADE is standing in a well-dug hole. His twins, immaculate in black, look on as he starts planting the tree.

Bella opens the letter.

ALFIE (V.O.)

My dear Bella. As per my somewhat pedantic instructions, I assume that you are all shivering in my garden - so far so good. Vernon should be planting a young oak. Make sure that he packs the earth down properly.

Bella looks across at Vernon, he nods and Bella smiles faintly.

ALFIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The reason for planting the tree is, I admit, a selfish one. I quite like the idea of you telling your wonderful progeny of this objectionable old fool who used to potter round the garden. So it is planted for you, and future generations of wonderful, dysfunctional artists.

She walks into Alfie's, and sits in Alfie's old armchair.

ALFIE (V.O.)(CONT'D)

The boring details are, as ever, in the hands of solicitors, but the bare fact is that my home is now Vernon's. You'll be able to keep an eye on the daft bugger, because I'm giving you your flat. I own it, or more correctly 'owned it'. The unfortunate Mr. Lichfield was merely acting on my behalf. Or should I say on behalf of the old Alfie. You were a wonderful pupil and a treasured friend, and you helped me remember the good things. Now go and top up Milly's drink and get the others indoors before they freeze to death.
Yours sincerely, Alfred Stephenson.

The first drops of rain fall as everyone comes inside. Bella goes out and looks up as the rain bounces off her face. She manages a smile through the tears.

149 EXT. STREET. MORNING - THE NEXT DAY

149

Bella is walking along the street, suddenly she stops. We wonder why, as she just stares. We see that growing through the cracks between two huge paving slabs is a perfect cornflower, drinking up the morning sun. She is transfixed by it. Slowly she breaks into a great big smile.

149A INT. OFFICE - DAY

149A

Billy and Bella sit nervously in the outer office of esteemed publishing company Harper Collins. At a plush desk sits a SECRETARY who senses their nervousness and smiles.

Her phone rings, and she answers it. After a moment she sets it down and nods to Bella to enter the big double doors, which Bella tentatively does.

Billy watches her go.

150 INT. BOARDROOM - DAY

150

Bella is standing at the end of a long mahogany table, reading aloud.

BELLA

... And as Lunadrunk in the view she was filled with something quite magical. In the distance she could see the southern shore of the Caspian Sea, which isn't a sea at all but actually the biggest lake in the world.
Luna thanked the Sage.
"Oh it's nothing, you haven't done the hard part yet".
"Really?", said Luna.

"Now you must believe" said the Sage.

And as Bella reads, her characters come to life, leaping from the page, running around the room.

BELLA (CONT'D)

"But I can't see them from here" said Luna, straining her eyes to see over the edge.

"Let me help you," said the Sage and he pushed Luna off the mountain.

Luna screamed to the Sage "Why did you do that, I can't fly".

"Says who?" he replied. And the wind lifted Luna. And she soared.

"Can you see them now?" yelled the Sage.

"Yes", said Luna, gliding through the air, with the wind whistling between her wings, "I can see thousands of them".

For the first time in a hundred years, the Sage allowed himself a smile.

Her proud smile is met by smiles from around the table.

PUBLISHER

Lovely, Miss Brown, absolutely lovely.

And what's the book called, Miss Brown?

151 EXT. BELLA'S GARDEN - AFTERNOON

151

Bella reads her newly published book to the twins, Milly and Vernon. Constance and ducklings swim in the pond. We see the finished garden for the first time, in full bloom. It is meticulously arranged by colour.

152 INT. LIBRARY - DAY

152

A parcel arrives on Miss Bramble's desk.

She unwraps a tin of biscuits, and a copy of Bella's book - 'The Heart and The Bottle'. Her face reddens with envious rage.

153 INT. CHURCH - DAY

153

Backlit by the evening sun, Billy and Bella enter. Billy stops at the door, and encourages Bella to take a few tentative steps.

She comes slowly to the front of the church, and her face is gradually filled with joy and wonder as she stares in awe. As Billy joins her at her side and takes her hand, we see they are in the Chapel of Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome, looking up at the breathtaking beauty of Bernini's 'The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa of Avila'.

And Bella loves it.

END