

The Darwinist

by

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Abstract

The Darwinist is a full length one act play exploring the relationship between Charles Darwin, evolutionary theory and the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa. Told through the story of Elisa Wallace, the wife of a Darwin scholar who tests positive for HIV, *The Darwinist* uses elements of Charles Darwin's biography and his ideas on race and evolutionary change, to create an understanding of the growth and spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Dedication

I dedicate this play and ultimate degree to the late Lillian Gale, who went back to school at the age of 47 and showed me that one is never too old to learn, and to my son, Clayton Cooper, in hopes that I have presented the same positive example.

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Introduction

Race is an inescapable reality. It is not a metaphorical abstraction or a sociological construct to be deconstructed. Race is more than an idea. It is a fact, a biological fact of life. It is the first physical detail noticed in appearance. It is the one genetic difference that defines absolutely every aspect of human experience. It is impossible to live outside of race. It is impossible to think or write outside of race. Even if your race, the colour of your skin, is not significant to you, it will be to someone else. You can forget it for a moment, but the reminders are ever-present. You cannot transcend race. Race transcends you.

I have the spent the last five years exploring the great thinkers of Western civilization and have dedicated the last three or more years to the life and work of the most venerable and influential scientist since Galileo: Charles Darwin. As a black writer, who fled university 25 years earlier due to the oppressive force of racist thought, I felt it important to my ongoing intellectual development to return and confront those philosophical demons who once terrorized me with their assumed supremacy. Older, wiser, and much thicker-skinned—daring to master the masters—I endeavoured to approach the work with objectivity: to lay aside what I understood from my black experience to be the truth, and open my mind to the wisdom of the one man who continues to shape Western thought, in the hope of reaching greater understanding. I have defended Darwin's use of Herbert Spencer's term "Survival of the Fittest," arguing that he is referring to reproductive success and not domination of one group over another. In one essay, I went so far as to disregard the assumption of white supremacy inherent in the language Charles Darwin uses to express his ideas on human evolution, and to argue that it is not race by which he measures

human capacity but the level of civilization attained. I have even excused the man his thinking, claiming he was a good soul but just a product of his time.

I can make these assertions because they are objectively true. However, when members of the black community, or my peers and professional colleagues of Jewish or non-European descent, question why I, as a black writer and antiracism activist, would defend a man whose work became the rationalization for the European colonization of Africa, the extermination of the Jewish people in Germany, and has contributed to the ongoing exploitation and oppression of black and brown people globally, I cannot help but think that I have betrayed a truth that transcends objectivity. That truth lies in how ideas are used and how they impact the quality of life of the recipients of that knowledge, no matter how scientifically substantiated or dispassionately presented they may be.

Was Charles Darwin a racist? Can Charles Darwin be held responsible for the ills of the world that have been perpetrated in his name or generated from his ideas? The answer to both questions is no. But to ignore the fact that his work has contributed to the detriment of society, in relation to race, as well as to the scientific good of mankind, would be remiss. Yet, I also believe that if Darwin's work and his ideas can be used to promote racial cruelty and hatred, then they can also be used to facilitate racial understanding. Such is my ultimate intent as a black playwright. In this introduction to my play, *The Darwinist*, I would like to explore Charles Darwin's ideas on human racial difference, how they relate to my play, and why they are significant in understanding Western indifference to the AIDS pandemic in Africa.

Charles Darwin's views on race and difference are a mass of contradictions. On one level, biographies reveal Charles Darwin to be a kind and gentle man, sympathetic to the Black race and vigorously opposed to the enslavement of others on that basis. On the other hand, he is a Victorian male empowered by his belief in English racial and cultural superiority. In *The Origin of Species* (1858), where Darwin cautiously illustrates and defends his theories of biological evolution, *race* is a term of little significance. Human racial difference is rarely mentioned in his treatise on evolutionary change. Yet *The Descent of Man* (1871) is clearly written from a white supremacist, paternalistic, and colonial perspective. In his attempt to place man within the evolutionary scope of nature and examine how his theories of variation, descent through modification, and natural and sexual selection operate in a human context, racial difference takes on greater importance. In the earlier work, what is stressed is the importance of individual difference as the fodder for natural selection and that all life is connected through a complex web of interdependencies. In the later work, the standard by which he assesses human evolutionary progress is framed within the racially-charged dialectic of the "savage" versus the "civilized"—with white European nations at the highest end of the evolutionary scale, and the brown and black "savage" others at the lower end.

Most of Darwin's knowledge of human racial difference was garnered through his experiences with the indigenous peoples he encountered in the five years he spent traveling with the *Beagle*. *The Voyage of the Beagle* reveals Darwin to be as interested in human racial difference as he is in the biological diversity and geological compositions of the various countries he visits. Throughout his travels, Darwin records the observable physical traits of the various peoples he encounters,

eschewing derogatory statements in his descriptions. With the exception of the Fuegians, rarely does he express repugnance at the physical appearance of the aboriginal peoples. For example, of an unnamed tribe of Indians allied with the conquering Spanish General Rosas, Darwin describes the men as “a tall, fine race, and the women deserving to be called ‘beautiful’” (*Beagle* 70). In fact, one could argue that Darwin found brown skin attractive:

The common people, when working, keep the upper part of their bodies quite naked; and it is then that the Tahitians are seen to advantage. They are very tall, broad-shouldered, athletic, and well proportioned. It has been remarked, that it requires little habit to make dark skin more pleasing and natural to the eye of the European than his own color. A white man bathing by the side of a Tahitian, was like a plant bleached by the gardener’s art compared with the fine dark green one growing vigorously in the open fields. (*Beagle* 404)

On the other hand, Darwin is not as complimentary to people of mixed race, whom in each situation he expresses a certain disdain for. Of General Rosas’ army he writes: “... I should think such a villainous, banditti-like army was never before collected together. The greater number of men were of a mixed breed, between Negro, Indian and Spaniard. I know not the reason, but men of such origin seldom have a good expression of countenance” (*Beagle* 70). Darwin describes the people of Callao more negatively: “Callao is a filthy, ill-built, small seaport. The inhabitants, both here and at Lima, present every imaginable shade of mixture, between European, Negro, and Indian blood. They appear a depraved, drunken set of people” (*Beagle* 368). Darwin’s account of his guide in Mauritius fares better, but his bias against racial mixing is evident: “He was of a race many times crossed, and although with a dusky skin, he had not the disagreeable expression of a mulatto It was

strange to my ears to hear a man, nearly white and respectably dressed, talking with indifference of the times he was a slave” (*Beagle* 486).

What Darwin takes exception to in racially diverse people is unstated in his work, but one can speculate. Is it skin colour? Is it that these people are proof that the human races mix and are therefore all of the same species? Or did they represent European indiscretion, lust, desire, or love for the savage “other”? Darwin is certainly most accepting of his Mauritius guide, but is it because of his whiteness or because this man had been a slave?

Charles Darwin was a passionate abolitionist. As a student in Edinburgh, he learned taxonomy from a freed slave by the name of John Edmonstone, a man he found to be pleasant and intelligent. However, Darwin had the opportunity to witness the cruelty of slavery firsthand, and this left a lasting impression on him:

I thank God, I shall never again visit a slave-country. To this day, if I hear a distant scream, it recalls with painful vividness my feelings, when passing a house near Pernambuco, I heard the most pitiable moans, and could not suspect that some poor slave was being tortured, yet I knew I was as powerless as a child even to remonstrate. I suspected that these moans were from a tortured slave, for I was told that was the case in another instance. Near Rio de Janeiro I lived opposite an old lady, who kept screws to crush the fingers of her female slaves. I have staid [*sic*] in a house where a young household mulatto, daily and hourly, was reviled, beaten and persecuted enough to break to spirit of the lowest animal. (*Beagle* 497)

To Charles Darwin, slavery was an intolerable evil, and the subject created tensions in his relationships with Captain Robert Fitzroy of the *Beagle*, and with his closest associate, the geologist Charles Lyell—both of whom had spoken favourably of the institution:

I will not even allude to the many heart-sickening atrocities which I authentically heard of; nor would I have mentioned the above revolting details, had I not met with several people, so blinded by the constitutional gaiety of the negro, as to speak of slavery as a tolerable evil. Such people have generally visited at the houses of the upper classes, where the domestic slaves are usually well treated; and they have not, like myself, lived amongst the lower classes. Such enquirers will ask slaves about their condition; they forget that the slave must indeed be dull, who does not calculate on the chance of his answer reaching his master's ears. (*Beagle* 497)

I cannot find one instance in Charles Darwin's biographies where he speaks unfavourably or derogatorily of black people. Each personal encounter recorded in *The Voyage of the Beagle* shows his respect for their intelligence, countenance, and being. He always displays great empathy for their plight. In response to a story about a runaway slave who throws herself off a mountain summit rather than be recaptured, he writes, "In a Roman matron this would have been called the noble love of freedom: in a poor negress it is mere brutal obstinacy" (*Beagle* 20). As a man of science, Darwin could not find any scientific justification for slavery and hoped that his work would prove the humanity of the black race: "Man springing from one stock'—that was his axiom. From this it followed that all human types were 'varieties.' If he could prove this, it would be a blow to the apologists of slavery, who made the black a separate species" (Desmond 155).

I raise the previous examples to show that Charles Darwin was a man who, for the most part, had his heart in the right place. Where he gets into trouble in today's society is in the whole debate over "savage" as opposed to "civilized" values. This debate originated in the sixteenth century—long before Charles Darwin had permeated European thought and perceptions of the "other" (Pieterse 31). Charles Darwin, like the majority of Europeans traveling the world in the nineteenth century,

carried his hegemonic beliefs with him, judging the indigenous peoples he encountered by the degree to which their natural habits and behaviours had been tamed by European contact and reflected European moral and cultural values. Darwin, unlike others of his time, was not so shallow as to judge people solely on the basis of their race. But racial difference is implicit in the debate, since the “savage” is invariably brown and the “civilized” is predominantly white.

Darwin states very clearly in *The Descent of Man* that the external differences of the races of mankind, while noteworthy, are of no meaningful value. It is the difference in the moral, intellectual, and social faculties that are of the greatest import to him. However, by the time he concludes that observable racial differences are insignificant, he has already well established and given ample proof that the “savages” of the world are of lower mental, moral, and social capacities.

Where mental faculties are concerned, Darwin almost immediately dismisses the potential for all humanity to have equitable capabilities: “The variability or diversity of the mental faculties in men of the same race, not to mention the greater differences of men of distinct races, is so notorious that not a word need here be said” (*Descent* 26). But Darwin continues to point out that savages are barely capable of abstraction in words, numeracy, or self-reflection: “On the other hand, as Buchner has remarked, how little can the hard worked wife of a degraded Australian savage, who uses very few abstract words, and cannot count above four, exert her self-consciousness, or reflect on the nature of her own existence” (*Descent* 81). Later on, he continues to add that savages have difficulty distinguishing between subjective and objective impressions, between dream and reality. Granted, it was Darwin’s intent to show that there are fine graduations, from the highest to the lowest, in the

mental powers of humankind, and that “there is no fundamental difference between man and the higher mammals in their mental faculties” (*Descent* 64). But, one has to ask, what impression is a reader to take away of the “savage” from Darwin’s comparison with dogs?

The savage and the dog have found water at a low level, and the coincidence under such circumstances has become associated in their minds. A cultivated man would perhaps make some general proposition on the subject; but from all that we know of savages it is certainly doubtful whether they would do so, and a dog certainly would not. But a savage, as well as a dog, would search in the same way, though frequently disappointed; and in both it seems to be equally an act of reason, whether or not any general proposition on the subject is consciously placed before the mind. (*Descent* 74)

While Darwin rejects Alfred Wallace’s conclusion that “savages” have “a brain little superior to apes” (*Descent* 47), it would seem that Darwin’s opinion is that the “savage brain” is barely larger than a dog’s.

The cultural development of the “savage” is also, in Darwin’s estimation, low on the human evolutionary scale. He seemingly ridicules aboriginal artistic expression: “Judging from the hideous ornaments and equally hideous music admired by most savages, it might be urged that their aesthetic faculty was not so highly developed as in certain animals, for instance birds” (*Descent* 90). Remaining in the same relative state of development as at the time of their discovery, with little cultivation of abundant arable land, domestication of animals, or advancement in weaponry or tools, whatever advancements “savages” have made in these areas are due to European influence, according to Darwin.

Darwin paints the most disparaging portrait of “savages” and their societies. The litany of negative attributes is extensive: pleasure in cruelty to animals, robbery

of strangers, indifference to the suffering of others, disrespect of women, intemperance, utter licentiousness, lack of restraint, no reproach. Darwin even doubts that, in some tribes, “incest would be looked upon with horror,” and with some savages, “humanity is an unknown virtue” (*Descent* 113). The list goes on and on. Darwin defines the moral being as “one who is capable of comparing past and future actions and motives and approving or disapproving of them” (*Descent* 108). When it comes to morality, Darwin promotes the idea that the “savages” of the world have almost no sense at all.

Of course, the civilized nations and their cultures are vastly superior in every way: morality, intellect, weaponry, food production, accumulated wealth, as well as their ability to conquer the world through colonization. Darwin writes, “for without the accumulation of capital the arts could not progress; and it is chiefly through their power that the civilized races have extended, and are now everywhere extending their range, so as to take the place of the lower races” (*Descent* 131). In the human struggle to survive, it is tribe against tribe, race against race and nation against nation, and “[w]hen civilized nations come in contact with barbarians, the struggle is short . . .” (*Descent* 178). Charles Darwin has no doubt that “civilized” races will supplant the “savages” of the world: “At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate, and replace the savage races throughout the world. At the same time the anthropomorphous apes ... will no doubt be exterminated . . .” (qtd. in Alland 184).

Civilization is not without its problems. According to Darwin, it too has its higher and lower beings. It is populated with undesirables—criminals and mad men, the less intelligent, the less virtuous, the poor and the feeble—all of whom stand a

much better chance of leaving their offspring behind and degrading the civilized races: “Or as Mr. Greg [W. R.] puts the case: “The careless, squalid, uninspiring Irishman multiplies like rabbits: the frugal, foreseeing, self-respecting, ambitious Scot, stern in his morality, spiritual in his faith, sagacious and disciplined in his intelligence, passes his best years in struggle and celibacy, marries late, and leaves few behind him” (*Descent* 135). Darwin quotes Francis Galton widely, and he also makes his case for eugenics:

In regard to the moral qualities, some elimination of the worst dispositions is always in progress even in the most civilized nations. Malefactors are executed or imprisoned for long periods, so that they cannot freely transmit their bad qualities. Melancholic and insane persons are confined, or commit suicide. Violent and quarrelsome men often come to a bloody end. The restless ... will not follow any steady occupation—and this relic of barbarism is a great check to civilization. (*Descent* 133)

Darwin adds: “In the breeding of domestic animals, the elimination of those individuals, though few in number, which are in any marked manner inferior, is by no means an unimportant element towards success” (*Descent* 134).

Charles Darwin wrote *The Descent of Man* with the intent of proving that humanity evolved from a pre-existing form and that all men are descendants of the same stock. He argues that the races of man should not be classified as distinct species because they graduate into each other, and that it is hardly possible to discover clear, distinctive characters among them. The similarities among the races are enough to warrant that all be classified as the same species, and that if mankind had evolved from more than one form, there would be marked differences in vital physical structures. However, Darwin places his conclusions about the races of mankind within the long convoluted argument about the challenges a naturalist faces

in taxonomic classification and the arbitrariness of the terms used in ranking. Returning again to the argument that he exhaustively presents in *The Origin of Species*, Darwin shows that he is most concerned with debunking the notion that each life form, including humanity, is a separate act of creation by God.

Proving that the races of mankind are all of the same species is not his main concern, only that they share a common progenitor. Furthermore, by the time Darwin concludes that the races of man had best be classified a sub-species, he has characterized the “savage” races as so diminished in their capacities that one can easily view them as vastly inferior to their “civilized” counterparts, despite any similarities that they share as humans—thus feeding pre-existing European assumptions of the “other” and reinforcing the notion of European racial supremacy.

In recent history, there has been a movement afoot to white-wash Charles Darwin’s life and work, to de-emphasize the racist aspects in his writings, and to disassociate him from the destructive ideas of other scientists and thinkers of his time, like Francis Galton and Herbert Spencer. Regardless of what Darwin’s intent as a man and a scientist may have been, it is all written there, on the page. The connections are direct and clear. This assertion is not meant to diminish his genius or accomplishments as a scientist, or to defame his character as a gentle, moral, and caring being. I am certain that he would have been saddened and appalled by how many of his ideas have been put to use in the world or how they may have been interpreted. However, it is important to note that the casual observations Charles Darwin made of the various races of people he encountered on his journeys, along with those made by many of his scientific peers, became translated into scientific evidence in *The Descent of Man*. This evidence went a long way in legitimizing

European domination and exploitation of Africans and other Third World peoples, and contributed reinforcing racist perceptions and stereotypes of people of colour that persist today.

Even now, Africa labours under the burden of the “savage” stereotype and racist assumptions. It is still viewed as the “dark continent,” and one need only look at a map of the world at night to see that very little light shines there. On a continent that can still boast a wealth of natural resources, the majority of the African nations are plagued by poverty and civil unrest, brutal territorial and tribal wars, cruel dictatorships, insufficient industrial and economic development, and crumbling infrastructures barely able to provide the necessities of life—like food or clean drinking water or educational and medical services—for its ravaged citizens. Now the AIDS pandemic is sweeping through the continent. The TV flickers images of hunger and ignorance and violence and bloodshed and death and destruction, and it has a black face. But very few care to think that this is the consequence of hundreds of years of slavery and European colonial imperialism. Instead we think, “How horrible! How savage! How uncivilized! What is wrong with these people? Why can’t they get it together?” Then, taking comfort in the knowledge that because we live where we live and how we live, we are not like “those” people. We indifferently change the channel to the latest reality show, like *The Apprentice* or *The Amazing Race*, and not give it any more thought. I know that this is how we think in the Western world. This is how I thought—shamefully revealing that I am one of “us” as well as a descendant of one of “them.”

Prior to entering the Graduate Liberal Studies Program at Simon Fraser University, I had spent 18 months researching a new play on the origins and the

spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa. I abandoned this project in favour of a play about Charles Darwin. I became fascinated by his mind, his relationship to nature, and how he created his theories of evolution. Unfortunately, both Darwin's life and evolutionary theory are dry and undramatic. The theatre is a figurative, metaphorical space, where greater truths and universality are revealed. I had learned from my previous experience as a dramatist working with biographical and historical material that whatever interested me about Charles Darwin would need to be framed within a specific context, a human context, for it to have any relevance and meaning to a contemporary audience. I needed a story. And what story could I tell as a middle-aged, black Canadian woman that would reflect my wide-ranging interests in Charles Darwin? *Darwin's Ghost*, by Steve Jones, led me back to my research on HIV and AIDS in Africa. It was there I found my story.

According to Jones, AIDS is proof of Darwin's theory of Descent Through Modification: "the AIDS virus is change seen under the microscope" (Jones 3). AIDS has an extremely rapid mutation rate, with each host infected with its own unique variation of the disease, making it, in my mind, the most adaptable living organism known to man. How could we ever find an effective cure or vaccine or treatment for the disease if it keeps changing? How many generations would it take before humans evolved a natural immunity? If AIDS continues to spread unchecked, will it spell extinction for mankind? Or is the only way to stop the spread of the pandemic is to change human sexual behaviours?

When the AIDS epidemic began in the West, it was a disease of homosexuals, drug addicts, and prostitutes. We cared because it was our sons and daughters who were dying. Heterosexuals felt safe because the majority did not engage in those

risky behaviours. But the global image of AIDS is black or brown. More than 30 million people in sub-Saharan Africa alone are infected with HIV—men, women, and children. The impact on already fragile African societies is one of mounting devastation. But Western governments and pharmaceutical companies don't care. Buried in their minds is the assumption that these infected dying people are just poor licentious savages who, as Charles Darwin says, "cannot change or will not change their habits" (*Descent* 178). And assistance rarely comes with impossible-to-meet conditions. We don't really care because "we" are not like them. So with racist indifference we watch the numbers mount as the disease spreads—and falsely believe that our wealth and our education and our medicine and our morals will keep us safe. The pandemic could not possibly spread here. But we forget that AIDS is a heterosexual disease and that even nice, middle class, and married white women in North America are waking to find they too are now infected. The numbers of those infected in North America are growing. I cannot help but see the pattern of the AIDS pandemic as spreading straight up out of Africa, across the Indian Ocean, around Southeast Asia, through Russia and into Eastern Europe, forming a big question mark, and I ask, "How long before the pandemic is here?" It is knocking on the door of the West.

The Darwinist is a play about a nice Western woman named Elisa Wallace, the wife of a Darwin scholar, who finds her life threatened by HIV/AIDS through her husband's philandering, and discovers that she is like so many women who are dying in Africa today. It is also the story of Juliana, an African woman dying of AIDS. On the surface, *The Darwinist* would appear to be more of a treatise on the spread of AIDS in Africa than an examination of Darwin and his work. However, Darwin is, by

no means, ancillary to the play. I have attempted to create an environment dominated by Charles Darwin and his ideas, both evidently and imperceptibly. Charles Darwin is the fuel of romantic fantasy, and basic elements of his evolutionary theories are used to inform the action of the play, as well as the characters' personalities. It is in the larger human story of AIDS, and in the recurring themes of change, connectedness, and difference in *The Darwinist*, where Charles Darwin and his work gain their dramatic significance.

The Darwinist is also a play about race. All the characters are white, with the exception of Juliana who only appears as a growing image on a television. Like Charles Darwin, all the characters are nice, well-positioned, economically endowed people whom no one would consider racist by their actions or their thinking, and each would be appalled at an accusation of racism. To be certain, each character is too educated and too politically correct to use the term "savage" or any other racially derogatory name. As a black playwright working from an antiracism mandate, I know that to assign blame for action or shame for thoughts is alienating to predominantly white audiences. By juxtaposing Elisa's story with Juliana's imagistic story, it is my hope that the audience will see themselves in the "other," and gain sympathy and understanding for how AIDS has come to be a pandemic in Africa and the world.

According to Charles Darwin, "The highest possible stage in moral culture is when we recognize that we ought to control our thoughts and 'not even in inmost thought to think again the sins that made the past so pleasant to us'" (*Descent* 119). If Western media are any indication, we live in a society that can barely restrain its actions, let alone control its thoughts. Charles Darwin was a man of the highest

moral order and judged the world by his standards. However, that is not the world we live in today. If Darwin were alive and attempting to place humanity in the context of his evolutionary theories, I am certain that he would have very different opinions about what constitutes “civilized” and “savage” behaviour. In fact, he might possibly reverse his comparisons. He would live in a city among people from all races of mankind. With his exceptional powers of observation, he would see that no race or nation could claim moral superiority. He would see that the “civilized” are equally capable of indifference to the suffering of others. Through the global spread of HIV/AIDS, he would see that people of all races and in all societies have difficulties changing their behaviour. A fair and honest man, Charles Darwin’s perspectives would alter. He would drop the qualifiers and objectively explore human commonalities. And with the aid of modern science and the advancements in the field of genetics, as a scientist, he would declare that there are no differences in the races of mankind. None at all.

The Darwinist

Scene 1

In the darkness we hear the voices of children singing in Luganda or Swahili. A series of 19-inch televisions arranged close to the audience come alive. The television images show that we are outside small, impoverished hut in Southern Africa. A statuesque African woman with a baby wrapped on her back tends a small vegetable garden. Scratched out of the dry red earth, the garden is green and healthy, though far from abundant. She uses a makeshift hoe to rake at the earth between the small rows. The baby cries heartily and the woman momentarily stops working, takes the baby off her back and offers it her breast. Once the baby is feeding quietly, the woman picks up the hoe and continues working. These images are a la World Vision or some other fundraising charity type organization.

As the African woman, Juliana, works her garden on screen and the singing fades, Elisa Wallace, a small dark haired woman, mid forties, plainly attractive, dressed in shades of brown, enters and takes her place in the center of the garden. This garden is in Vancouver, thick and lush and green, if a little wild and uncared for.

Elisa

I like to watch Doddy and Adam in the garden. Our Darwinian Garden. With two small separate, rag tag plots deliberately overplanted with Lupines and depopulated by the struggle to survive. The rest? Mostly what blows or creeps in and takes root. Morning glories, cornflowers, foxglove, black berry briars, and a few exotic escapees from under our neighbor's bamboo fence. Doddy sits on his haunches, pointing out the new arrivals and examining their forms. While Adam patiently names each species, attempting to explain the geographical distribution of life on earth. Two urban naturalists, at play in their own back yard.

“Everything travels”, Adam explains. “From here to somewhere there. Crows fly, buffalo roam, fish swim ... Even flowers and

plants... creep along with elaborate root systems. Or their seeds are born in the wind, float on the waves, get carried away on the soles of the feet. Even pooped out. Eaten here, plopped out there.” And Doddy laughs. Poop jokes are big with Doddy. “That’s how plant life and trees spread, taking root wherever they land and attempting to flourish. You see,” Adam continues. “All life is about growth. Not just in being but in numbers. And to grow up or out, you need room. Room to grow. Without it, life gets crowded in its little space and the struggle to survive gets fierce.”

Doddy squints and looks up at Adam. Doddy was born a skeptic and challenges everything he’s told or asked. “But what about the lupines, Dad? There’s not that many this year and that is less than last year. They grow up, but they don’t spread. They just die and die.” And Adam, ever the pedagogue, gets this excited gleam in his eye. You can just tell this is what he’s been waiting for. “Ahhh”, he exclaims with a fathers pride and great satisfaction. “That’s because they have been fenced in. Life spreads until it meets a barrier. Something it can’t cross or penetrate. Natural barriers like a river, an ocean, a mountain range, or new geographic or climatic conditions. Or man made barriers like a simple wall of stone.” But Doddy has already lost interest. He picks up a twig and starts to sword fight with his shadow and Adam looks to me, throws his hands up in the air in mock exasperation, as if to say, “He’s your son.” And wanders back into the house.

I don’t say anything. I just smile as Adam brushes past me. I want to say, “Tell him about the exceptions. Tell him about zebra mussels from the Caspian Sea that are now choking the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway. Tell him about the Asian Horned Beetles devouring our coniferous forests. Tell him about Gypsy moths and Dutch Elms disease and sea lampreys and SARS, and thousands of other non-indigenous species that have been introduced into our country and threaten natural ecology and bio

diversity. Tell him about the one species that knows no boundaries. Tell him about man. Tell him how man ignores barriers and spreads life around the globe like a disease. “

But I don't say anything. After all, I am not the expert.

Scene 2

Like a safe protective box, taking up the center of the stage is a house, or the suggestion of a house, around which the garden grows. It is an old character house in Kitsilano, with wood finish, wood floors and area rugs. It is comfortable, eclectic and a little worn. There is the sound of keys in a lock and a male voice. As he enters, we see him through the living room. This is Adam Wallace, a 45 year of history of science professor. He is a handsome man, tall, blond, and casually dressed in blue jeans, a red fleece and a pale yellow tea shirt. Colorful and animated, he speaks with much enthusiasm.

Adam The autobiography is good. It is always wise to go directly to the source. And it is interesting to see what a person feels are the most formative, transformative or meaningful experiences of their life. How they contextualized their experience of being, particularly the events surrounding their notoriety. What one chooses to omit from their life experience is often more notable than what they chose to focus on, and people sometimes lie in order to construct or perpetuate a public image that approximates their own, often self-deluded, perceptions. However, as with most autobiographies, it is a very narrow, selective and subjective perspective.

(Adam is followed in by Carolina, a grad student, mid 20s, slim, well shaped, fair and pretty. She is dressed casually in pants and wool turtleneck and jacket, in soft tones of gray.)

Carolina So, you're saying that Charles Darwin was a liar?

Adam (He laughs) No, of course not.

Carolina I see. Only self deluded. (Chuckles)

Adam No. I was just pointing out its limitations. I think some people have great insight into their own life and experience. Can view and portray their actions with clarity and truth. I just think it is impossible to fully grasp the magnitude of ones actions, especially when the repercussions continue long after ones death. This is particularly true for Charles Darwin. He knew that his evolutionary theories would be hot. But there was absolutely no way for him to know how profoundly they would impact society and continue to alter the course of human history, decades and centuries later. (Reaches for her coat.) Here, let me take your coat.

Carolina Are you sure this is all right? My being here?

Adam (Shrugs) I don't see why not. We're not doing anything wrong. Are we?

Carolina (Uncertain) No, but what about your wife?

Adam What about her?

Carolina I just feel a little...uncomfortable.

Adam Why? We're just here to pick up a book. Right?

Carolina Right.

Adam It is not unusual for me to meet with some of my students at home. You're my student. Right?

Carolina Right. (Beat) Still, I think we should...

Adam There is nothing to worry about. Have a seat. We won't be long. Besides, Elisa's at work. She won't be home for at least another

hour and a half. So we have plenty of time. Would you like something to drink?

Carolina No. No, I am fine. (Looking around) I like your house. It's cozy. Tasteful.

Adam Thank you. This is all Elisa's doing.

Carolina (Picks up a tacky Elvis clock from the fireplace mantle) Your wife's?

Adam No. She's the one with good taste. That one is mine. She tolerates it's. But my son loves it, especially when the legs get going. (He shakes his legs like Elvis and sings) Blue, blue, blue suede shoes. Blue, blue, blue suede shoes! (Carolina laughs) Cracks him up every time. Thank God for Dodd. Otherwise Elvis would be out on his blue suede butt.

Carolina With or without Elvis, it's a great house. (She sits on the sofa)

Adam I like it. A little old, a little worn, but warm and comfortable. Kind of like me.

Carolina You're not old. (There is a moment of silence between them. Adam miles and joins her on the sofa)

Adam Uh...where were we?

Carolina You were dissing Darwin's autobiography.

Adam I was not "dissing" it. Just pointing out some of its shortcomings.

Carolina Uh-huh.

Adam The point I was trying to get to is this: the autobiography is good and well and there are dozens of biographies that bring even greater relevance and meaning to Darwin's story because they have the benefit of hindsight. But the most important thing to remember about Charles Darwin is this; more than his family, his friends or

even his illnesses, his life was his work. To know Darwin's work is to know his life. Both are inextricably entwined. And both Darwin's life and his work begin with his voyage on the Beagle. If I were you, I would start there with the Voyage of the Beagle and the Journal of Researches. That's where I began, those many long years ago.

Carolina Well. Thanks for the recommendations, Professor Wallace. (And she offers him her hand)

Adam Why, you're welcome Ms. McCormick! (He kisses her hand.) You're very welcome.

Carolina I think we should get going.

Adam Uh. Sure. Just let me grab the book. It's upstairs in the bedroom.

Carolina And I gotta go pee in the worse way. (Adam makes a face) What's wrong?

Adam I am trying to imagine how that would be. Peeing in the worse way.

Carolina How about right here in the middle of your Persian rug?

Adam Not the worse, but pretty bad. Down the hall, first door on the left. (She exits to the washroom.) I'll be down in a sec.

(He runs upstairs. Elisa enters. She stamps her feet and shakes her umbrella. She takes off her coat and goes to hang it up and notices her husband's coat and another unfamiliar one. She peeks down the hall, into the living room. She goes to run upstairs. Stops herself, considers a moment and comes back down. Then she calls out.)

Elisa Hello...!

Adam (Coming down the stairs) Hey! You're home early.

Elisa I left work at noon. I had a doctor's appointment. What are you up to?

Adam (He kisses her on the forehead and she squirms) Not much. I just got in myself. I thought you were picking up Doddy today?

Elisa That was because I thought you couldn't. But here you are.

Adam Well, I had a change in schedule. I can go get him if you want me to.

Elisa No. It is all right.

Adam You're going to go?

Elisa No. I wasn't sure I'd make it in time so I asked your mother to pick him up and take him to her house.

Adam Oh. Are we supposed to nab him or is she dropping him off?

Elisa No. He's spending the night with her and she is taking him to school in the morning.

Adam Really? Why? What's up?

(Elisa, a bit annoyed is about to say something when Carolina enters from the bathroom. Elisa is surprised, but in the direction from which she came.)

Elisa Hello?

Adam Sorry. She was in the bathroom. This is Carolina. She's a Grad student. Doing some directed readings in none other than...

Elisa/Carolina Charles Darwin.

Elisa Don't get him started.

Carolina I am afraid I already have.

Adam This is Elisa, my wife.

Carolina (They shake hands) Great to meet you.

Elisa You came to the right man. I am sure he has whatever you are looking for. (Uncomfortable pause)

Adam I was giving Carolina a ride home...

Carolina I live just the other side of 4th...

Adam ...And we were talking biographies – which was best, what for and what not. So, I thought I would pass her the Desmond/ Moore. It is really the most comprehensive.

Elisa I prefer the Browne volumes.

Carolina Browne?

Elisa Yes. Janet Browne. Voyaging and what is the second volume called...?

Adam Power of Place.

Elisa Yes. That's it.

Adam They are both excellent as well. Maybe I should lend her both.

Elisa The library closed?

Adam No. I just thought...since she is here...

Carolina (Jumping in) What's the difference? (Adam and Elisa look at her) Between the two biographies? Comparatively, speaking. I mean, it's all the same information, right?

Adam There are great differences. Writing style, perspectives, contexts... But maybe we should discuss this elsewhere. (To Elisa) This is probably real boring to you by now.

Elisa No, not at all. It has been a long time since I watched you teach.

Adam What about Doddy?

Elisa What about Doddy?

Adam Why is he at my mother's?

Carolina Doddy?

Elisa Our nine year old.

Carolina Oh.

Adam Doddy was Darwin's nickname for his firstborn.

Elisa Adam wanted to call him Erasmus, after Darwin's brother and grandfather. It was all I could do not to miscarry. Can you imagine being called Erasmus in this day and age? No wonder he was a latent homosexual with an opium problem.

Adam He was not a junkie nor was he was he gay. That is not proven.

Elisa Proof, proof. It is all about proof with you. Any way, Robert and Fanny will be here at six. And even though it is an early supper, it is a school night and I didn't want to interrupt Doddy's routine.

Adam Is that still happening?

Elisa Why? Is there a problem? Come on, Adam. We talked about it last night.

Adam You said you had a lot going on. You said you were going to cancel.

Elisa (Annoyed) The only reason I wanted to cancel ... (She catches herself) I called them at home and I called Fanny at the studio. I couldn't reach them.

Adam Did you leave a message?

Elisa Yes, I left a message. I told them to call me at the office. But, I didn't hear anything by the time I left. Did they call here?

Adam I don't know. We just ran in. I didn't check for messages.

(Elisa crosses to the phone in the living room, picks up the receiver, listens a moment and then hangs up.)

Elisa No messages. So I assume that dinner is on. (Adam frowns) I don't see where it creates any problems. We've had it planned for a couple weeks.

Adam No problem. It's just... (Referring to Carolina) We just got going in our discussion. It doesn't give us much time. I don't know when we can reschedule...

Elisa And it's too late to reschedule Fanny and Robert.

Carolina It doesn't matter. I should be getting home anyway.

Elisa You can't run out on this evening, Adam.

Adam Wait a minute let me think. Ok. Ok. I have an idea. Why don't you stay?

Elisa (Surprised) What?

Carolina (Uneasy with the idea) No, I don't think that...

Adam It would be easier than all this running around. We could have our little tutorial. And if we are still going at it, when Robert and Fanny get here, we'll just set an extra place. What do you think Elisa? Are you up to it?

Elisa I am up to it but...

Carolina No. That's fine. Don't go to any trouble.

Adam No trouble at all. I am sure there is food and wine to go around. Robert and Fanny are quite...spirited. Wouldn't you say, Elisa? Robert is an Anglican minister . . .

Elisa Ex. Anglican Minister.

Adam That's right. And Fanny is yoga instructor. They're a bit of an odd combo.

Elisa But Carolina doesn't want to hang out with us old farts.

Adam Nonsense. The conversation is always lively. Darwinism tends to dominate. It could be fun for us to have a younger person at the table, especially one that doesn't roll their eyes and squish their peas under their plate. Though it is charming. And it could be a real education for you. So stay. I insist. (To Elisa) It'll be just like old times. What do you think, Elisa?

Elisa (A bit on the spot.) I guess it doesn't matter at this point. We're committed to dinner. It's as easy to cook for five as four. Sure why not. I can put off what I want until later. Stay. Adam wants you to stay.

Adam It could be fun.

Elisa It could be an education.

Carolina Ok. If it's really no problem... But I have to leave early.

Elisa Don't worry. It won't be a late night. If you will excuse me, I have to get dinner started. (Elisa exits. Adam and Carolina move into the living room)

Adam So this works for you?

Carolina Sure. It'll be great to see you in your natural habitat. If you take me home now it will look weird. We're good. Right?

Adam Well... sure. Sure. I'm fine. I hope we don't bore you.

Carolina No. You won't bore me. Look. You're sweating. Are you nervous? There is nothing to worry about. It'll be fun.

Adam Right.

Carolina Everything will be fine.

Adam All right. (Beat) I can't remember where we left off.

Carolina Something about the Voyage of the Beagle as the be all and end all of Darwin's existence.

Adam You have a good memory.

Carolina Hey. I don't earn all my marks for my good looks.

Adam Don't be naughty or I will send you home.

Carolina I'll be good. I promise.

Adam I'll skip the fooforah leading up to the sailing of the ship. Where to start? (Adam is a good teacher, a Darwin scholar and in his element with both) On January 16, 1832, armed with a copy of Charles Lyell's Principles of Geology, 23-year-old Charles Darwin, steps off the Beagle and onto the shores of Playa Plata in St. Jago in the Cape Verdi Islands. The most momentous first step in modern history. From that moment on Darwin begins to formulate a new vision that not only challenged everything he understood to be true about life and change...

Scene 3

Back in Africa and the garden. Only we see it on a series of 26-inch television sets. The garden is still health and strong. The African woman, Juliana, is still standing amidst the plantings but she is not tending to it.

She looks tired. She stands rocking the baby in her arms, trying to comfort it. The baby cries plaintively. Juliana looks worried and concerned about her child. But the garden too must be tended, her meager crop brought to fruition. She picks up her hoe and continues to scratch the earth.

Elisa

Charles Darwin sits on an enormous root growing out of the base of a huge tropical tree and looks out at the verdant splendor beneath the forest canopy. Green in green succulence. Never before has he gazed upon such rampant abundance with its infinite and unknowable diversity. There is Ceiba trees and cabbage palms with Spanish moss and jungle vines trailing from their branches and showy orchid blooming on their trunks. The aromas of pepper and clove and cinnamon fill the air. Colorful Toucans and parrots and hummingbird flutter above him and a million unknown species of insect skitter at his feet. He sits in astonished stillness. Suspended in that awesome moment, where one is struck with wonder, the arrhythmic heart skips its beat, and for a fraction of a second one experiences a taste of death and heaven. In that moment he has fallen completely and irrevocably in love.

Voluptuous Nature lays naked before him. She opens herself, inviting him to touch and probe the intimate folds of her perfection and plunge deep into the mysteries of limitless creation. She wraps her legs around his mind, her arms around his spirit, and drenches his body with warm, wet rain. He writes” Twiners entwining twiners – tresses like hair – beautiful lepidoptera – silence– hosannah.” He writes in post coital poetry. “I never experienced such intense delight” Sensuous Nature has captured his soul.

Adam sits on the grass at the base of a Maple tree on the Commons of McGill University. He is handsome – a grad student, working his way through school. He’s reading *The Voyage of the Beagle*, and speaks of Charles Darwin with ecstatic adoration. I want to be to

Adam what Nature is to Darwin. He says he sees in me a depth of beauty. I want to be his mistress. Having less than immeasurable varieties of perfection to offer, instead he makes me his wife.

Adam waves his hands excitedly, wildly, gesturing to the world around us. "Diversity is the fuel of evolution." But I know that singularity is the measure of love.

Scene 4

Vancouver. The living room, some time later. Only one of the walls has fallen away to reveal more of the garden. Carolina sits curled up on the couch listening as Adam lectures. He sits opposite to her, on a hassock. He is less animated, reflective but still, enthused.

Adam What Darwin came to understand was that volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and floods were not mere acts of God, but elements of a slow and never ending process of alteration. The land shells he kept finding on the summit of the Andean mountains were not remnants of Noah's great flood, but evidence of the oceans floor rising out of the water, incrementally over vast and unimaginable periods of time. A petrified forest in a sandstone sediment, told him the story of how a luxuriant tropical forest near the shores of the Atlantic, sank beneath thousands of feet of silt and sand. Only to slowly rise out of the sea like a watery phoenix, to stand atop a freezing mountain hundreds of miles from the shore. The earth was in constant motion and upheaval. Rising here and sinking there. Land constantly rising and falling. Elevation and subsidence. The earth shape shifting her face.

Carolina All this geology stuff is boring.

Adam But it's important. The thing to always remember about Charles Darwin is that he was a geologist first.

Carolina Great. But people don't go around talking about Darwin as geologist. They see him as a biologist. And when you think Darwin, you think of the Origin of Species, not the Origin of Rock.

Adam It is out of his geological findings that his biological questions arose. They got him thinking – if the earth's surface changed, then what about environments? And what of life within those environments? How could life, organic life, remain constant in an ever-changing world? Buried in the muck and rock were enormous remnants of an unwritten and long forgotten past– fossils and bones, dinosaurs, life forms long dead and unknown to humanity, yet bearing a curious resemblance to those still living. Where did they come from? Why did they go? And what was the relationship of these dead species to those still living? It may not sound very exciting, but these are earth shattering, world-altering questions. (Carolina smiles) What?

Carolina I have never met anyone who gets this excited by Charles Darwin. You really love your subject.

Adam I do. I have tremendous admiration for him. Ever since I was a kid. Some kids wanted to be Batman or Bobby Orr. I wanted to be Charles Darwin. I guess you could say he was my super hero. (Strikes a pose and sings to the tune of Spiderman) Evolution Man! Evolution man. Does whatever a scientist can!

Carolina (Laughs) When I was a kid I wanted to be Madonna. Her music sucks but she has some great moves.

Adam I guess you could say I was a bit bookish. I read the Beagle and I thought Darwin was a great explorer. Daring. Courageous. And always fair. An all around good guy. Of course the science was over my head. But sailing the seas and hiking across the wild unknown ... The jungles, the gauchos the Spanish/ Indian wars ... I found it all exciting and romantic.

Carolina So where do the Galapagos fit in?

Adam The Galapagos are the next leap in his theoretical development. Darwin noticed that the finches on these isolated islands in the middle of the Pacific were not unlike those he had seen on the mainland of South America. But his main question was how did they get from the mainland to these remote islands? What was the relationship of the living to the living? What is the connection?

Carolina But weren't all seventeen or whatever number, each a different species?

Adam Yes. Each species slightly different from the next and perfectly adapted to its specific environmental conditions. A confirmation of everything Darwin had seen in his travels and he rapidly believed to be dangerously true – that only on the surface did life appear static, permanent and unchanging. The world he knew was not the world that was or the world it would be in the future. The earth and everything on it was in a constant state of change. Everything is different and everything changes. And everything is somehow interconnected.

Carolina Difference and change. The two things people fear the most.

Adam That's because we perceive them as dangerous. Even more so in Darwin's day. Most people have a catastrophist's view of change. Sudden, dramatic, cataclysmic. Bam! Everything has changed. The old is obliterated. Washed away. Blown apart. Different. And in the aftermath, everything is created anew, rebuilt. It's scary. But change, in geological and evolutionary terms, is slow and gradual, over incredible lengths of time. Almost imperceptible. Not scary at all.

Carolina But change can and does happen fast. A meteor fell and obliterated the dinosaurs.

Adam Paleontologists are rethinking that scenario.

Carolina The Yanks dropped the “A” bomb and immediately ended World War 2. Boom! That was it.

Adam But even if it were so, those events did not occur in isolation. There were a multitude of smaller incidents that culminated in those large world-altering moments. Comets, like bombs, don’t just appear out of nowhere. Today we can look deep into the stars, track the orbits of comets, asteroids and meteors and predict the likelihood of their collision with the earth. And a conspiracy of a thousand moments led to the dropping of the bomb.

If you stop and take a good look, if you are sensitive to your surroundings, you can always see change coming. Change rarely comes unannounced. But most people ignore the signs. Don’t want to deal with it. Try to maintain the status quo because the alternative is too frightening. They refuse to look until change is upon them. And then they go, “Why, why did it happen?”

Carolina What about accidents? You’re walking down the street one day and a car hits you and you are paralyzed from the waist down and have to live in a wheel chair for the rest of your days. Just like Stephen King.

Adam King is still ambulating, I think.

Carolina But it happens. Or you are sitting in Starbucks, drinking a cafe latte, and minding your own beeswax. And all you are doing is killing time, reading Vanity Fair until you can go back to the Laundromat and transfer your white wash to the dryer. And suddenly you look up and there he is, the man of your fantasies, grinning down at you.

(Elisa has been listening in the background)

Adam Some would say there are no accidents. (Beat. A meaningful beat)
Everywhere Darwin looked, in everything in Nature, he found
evidence of change. And it scared him too. But he didn't look away.
Once he saw the truth written in stone, he could not maintain his
ignorance. Everything changes. Even people. Especially people. But
he didn't waste any time beating his breast asking why, why, why?
His question was, "How?" Then he understood that change was not
a singular event, but something slow and gradual accumulating
over time. A multitude of small changes, piling up, one on top of
the other. Until something that once was is so crucially altered that
it becomes something completely different.

Elisa Just like love. (They turn to her) Go to bed with sir Galahad. Wake
up with an asshole. Harlequin evolution. Here's a romance for you.

You start off feeling hot wet and wanting. Each touch is like a soft
electric shock, sparking a frenzy of pheromone driven desire. You
consume each other's thoughts by day and spend your nights
entwined like a tangle of pasiflora, impossible to unravel.
Everything about him is perfection. The sound of his voice is a
masterpiece of orchestral beauty. His words – an intoxicating
charm. But no words need be spoken because you can divine each
other's thoughts by simply looking into each other's eyes. His
morning breath is sweeter than a ripe banana. Even his shit is
something of the perfume of love. He is Apollo bathing you in the
golden sunlight of his presence and to simply look upon him is to
catch a glimpse of eternity.

Carolina And then what happens?

Elisa Little things. You begin to notice little things ... like his toes.

Adam Toes?

Elisa

Toes as long as fingers, that splay like the webbed feet of a duck. Or that thing on his chest you thought was a mole but is really a third nipple – the signs of a warlock. Not unattractive but just a little weird. Or the hair on the inside of his nose. So long that sometimes they curl around his nostrils and he plucks them like this ... (She pretends to pull a hair out of her nose. Carolina laughs) But these are the small imperfections that make a God, a mortal, and you are both only human. (She sits on the couch in between them.)

But gradually you notice other things. Like how he never puts anything back in the fridge after he takes it out. Or how he just sits down at the supper table and waits to be served. Or how he smacks his lips at the end of a meal he's enjoyed. Annoying little things that chip away at love. But you try to ignore them because it's the small stuff you don't want to sweat.

Then there are the things you can't ignore. Little differences, small changes in habit and behavior. Like how the man who never perspires begins to take on a salty, sweaty odor. Or how the smile on his face turns into a grimace whenever you walk into a room. How the spooning before you fall asleep becomes lying close beside each other, becomes lying ass cheek to ass cheek, becomes keeping to your respective sides of the bed. Or how deep kisses with tongue turn into a peck on the lips, to a peck on the cheek, to a peck on the forehead, to a simple goodbye when leaving the house.

You ask yourself, who is this stranger snoring softly next to me? When did the love go out of his eyes? And how come I didn't notice he just stopped being there. (Uncomfortable pause. Then to Adam) And dinner itself is likely to evolve into Chinese take out if you don't run to Safeway and pick up some butter, parsley and ... what's the third thing? Oh, yeah, and about 150 grams of cappicollo. Try to be exact.

Adam Uh ... I was in the middle of ...

Elisa I need some extra things, Adam. The cook can't leave the house.

Adam Well, sure. Ok. (He rises. To Carolina) Do you want to come?

Elisa I am sure she does. But she'll be fine here.

Carolina Yeah, I'm cool.

Elisa Don't worry. I'll take good care of your friend.

Adam Oh. Ok. (Grabs his coat) Back in a flash.

Carolina Take your time.

Elisa But not too long. Robert and Fanny will be here soon.

(Adam exits. There are a few moments of awkward silence as the two women check each other out)

Elisa Well ... Here we are.

Carolina You have a beautiful home.

Elisa Yes. And a beautiful child, too.

Carolina Doddy?

Elisa Yes.

Carolina He's nine. Right?

Elisa Right.

Carolina I have a nephew who is eleven. That's a great age. Young enough to still want to be tucked in, but too old to let you hold his hand when you walk down the street. Do you have a picture? (Elisa gets one

from the fire place mantel and gives it Carolina) Oh, is he ever a cutie. Does he ever look like you.

Elisa You think? Most people say he looks just like Adam.

Carolina Around the mouth maybe. But he definitely has your eyes. I bet the girls chase him around the schoolyard.

Elisa He is a little too young for that.

Carolina You never know these days.

Elisa Do you have children?

Carolina Me? (Laughs) No. I don't even have houseplants. My life is too crazy. One day, maybe I will fulfill my biological imperative.

Elisa Reproductive success is the only true success. In evolutionary terms.

Carolina How many children did he have?

Elisa As far as I know, only one. But who knows what Adam has been up to.

Carolina Oh. I meant Darwin.

Elisa 10. Two died.

Carolina 10 kids! You're lucky you weren't Mrs. Darwin.

Elisa I don't know. Darwin was a model husband. He hated being away from his wife. Rarely left her side. And he was an excellent, loving father. Always had time for his children. Did most of his writing and research with a sick kid in his lap. And, obviously the Darwin's had a very active sex life. I would say they had an enviable marriage.

Carolina You know a lot about him.

Elisa One does not live with a Darwinist without learning a thing or two about Charles Darwin.

Carolina What do you do for a living?

Elisa Me? I am a part time administrator for a small nonprofit organization called SIDA BC.

Carolina SIDA?

Elisa The French acronym for AIDS. We try to raise money for drugs and AIDS education in Africa.

Carolina Sounds interesting.

Elisa The job itself in a bit on the dull side. Admin. You know.

Carolina But it must be really rewarding.

Elisa Mostly it's sad. Almost pointless. We raise so little money. A drop in the bucket compared to the magnitude of the situation. 30 million people in sub Saharan Africa are HIV positive. Women and children. Thousands die each day. It's sad. What is even sadder is that all the sickness and death can be prevented with a little piece of latex. And people here don't really care about what's happening in Africa. Now, if we were trying to raise money for soccer equipment for needy children, we would be swimming in dough. Athletics sell. Give a dying kid a soccer ball. It's a bizarre way of thinking. But we do the best we can. And one has to believe that every little bit helps. (Pause) What about you? What's your story?

Carolina My story? I don't really have one. Born in Calgary. Raised in Abbotsford. Moved into Vancouver after high school...

Elisa You don't strike me as a history student.

Carolina I am not actually. I am in contemporary arts. Dance actually.

Elisa Now there is a stretch. Pardon the pun. So why are you interested in him?

Carolina Darwin?

Elisa Who else?

Carolina Oh. It's hard to say....

Elisa What did you say to Adam? When you approached him about studying under him?

Carolina Well, he approached me, actually.

Elisa Oh?

Carolina Yeah. I met Adam...Professor Wallace...Adam, through my boyfriend.

Elisa You have a boyfriend?

Carolina Yeah. Francis. That's how I met Adam. Through Francis. He is in the Galapagos doing some research. Monitoring that big oil spill off ... I forget where. You know, the big one that happened last summer.

Elisa No. I don't.

Carolina Any way, I met Adam at his going away party. I think Adam was his professor at one time.

Elisa So how did that lead to your ... present course of study?

Carolina I'm not too sure. I ran into Adam a couple of times on campus. He'd ask about Francis. We'd talk about the Galapagos. Darwin ... I don't know. I became interested. I like a challenge.

Elisa Adam can be very charismatic when he's teaching. He gets this boyish gleam in his eyes when he talks about Darwin. The same look Doddy gets when he's raving about Nintendo. Such enthusiasm. It is very endearing. His students can't help but fall in love with him. (There is a tense pause) I remember Francis. A long, strapping young man with light brown curls and freckles. Very focused. Very intense. Kind of like Howdy Doody on mental steroids.

Carolina (Laughs) I never heard Francis described that way before.

Elisa So when does he get back?

Carolina I am not sure exactly. Not for a long while. Seven, eight months.

Elisa How long has he been gone?

Carolina I am not sure. Four. Five, maybe. Five months.

Elisa Away for a whole year? (Carolina nods) A year is a long time in a relationship. How do you cope?

Carolina I keep busy. School, family, friends, hanging out.

Elisa Get lonely?

Carolina You ask a lot of questions.

Elisa You are sitting in my living room. I want to know who you are. How else can I find out without asking questions? I suppose I could hire a private investigator, but that seems a little extreme. Don't you think? (Elisa titters) So is that it? You're lonely?

Carolina No. I wouldn't say I was lonely.

Elisa It's nothing to be ashamed of. Your boyfriend is far away. It's only natural. Unless, of course, you didn't really care for him in the first

place. In which case, you are probably happy he's out of your hair.
(Beat)

Carolina I miss Francis. But I don't feel lonely. As I said, I have a lot going on in my life. I keep active.

Elisa That's good. I get lonely. Sometimes. Often. And I am married. Adam work, work, works. It seems most days we only cross paths. And then conversation is limited to things domestic. Sometimes I wonder how Adam copes. But then, he is stimulated all day. And evening, sometimes. Doddy is great company but there is only so much Zelda and Yu Gi Oh a parent can comprehend. And I am the only one at the office most of the time. There are days when I just crave some form of meaningful adult interaction. But then, you are free white and over 31 ... 21. That's the expression. I am sure you have a very demanding social life to keep you distracted.

Carolina You really should get out more. I have girlfriends with young children. They go absolutely squirrelly.

Elisa You're right. I should. Either that or my husband should stay home more. Time was the house was filled with students. Lots of laughter. Lots of debate. There were four or five that liked to hang around here. Francis was one. And another doe like creature. Not unlike yourself. What was her name. . . ? Anyway, I think the child was a bit unstable. I ran into her in Safeway one day and she burst into tears. In any case, it all stopped. They just stopped coming around. Or Adam stopped inviting them. I don't know which. But they stopped coming. A couple of three years now. Which is sad because it was great fun. I actually enjoyed playing the hostess at those little salon type gatherings. And it brought Adam and I together more often. Didn't have much need to get out then ... But maybe I will take your advice one day and get out more. On my own.

Carolina Good for you. Look. Is there anything I can do? To Help? With dinner? I am a terrible cook, but I am a whiz with a paring knife

Elisa No. Everything is under control. We're just waiting on Adam. But there is something you can do.

Carolina What's that?

Elisa Take the advice of an old married woman. Beware of loneliness. Isolation. It makes one behave in ways that are quite uncharacteristic. Do things that one would not ordinarily think of doing when one is otherwise socially or emotionally fulfilled. It precipitates change, changes that may have. . . undesirable repercussions. Not just for the individual, but for everyone around her.

Carolina (Pause) I'll, ah ... think about that.

Elisa Good.

Carolina You're sure it's ok about dinner? I mean I wouldn't want to impose on you.

Elisa No imposition. Besides, Robert and Fanny should be here any moment and the evening promises to be very interesting. And you're here to learn, right? (Sound at the door) There's Adam now. (He enters. To Adam) That was fast.

Adam I didn't want to keep the chef waiting. Parsley, butter, capicollo. Just like you ordered. (He hands her the bag)

Elisa Thank you, darling.

Adam Wait a second. (He takes the bag back and takes out a large container of Roloids)

Elisa We out already? You eat these things like candy. Tummy bothering you again?

Adam Just a little.

Elisa Poor baby. Have you been sneaking off to Mr. Tube Steak for lunch?

Adam No.

Elisa Adam ... ? (To Carolina) Adam has a weakness for hot dogs. Unfortunately, they don't agree with him. Acid reflux.

Adam I haven't been eating hot dogs. My stomachs just a bit upset. That's all.

Elisa I think he has an ulcer. But Adam won't see a doctor. You know, men. Stoic 'til the end. Oh well, back to the kitchen for me. I only hope supper isn't too upsetting for you. (She exits)

Adam (To himself) I don't even like hot dogs. (To Carolina) I tried to be as quick as possible. You okay?

Carolina I think so.

Adam Why? What happened?

Carolina Nothing happened. At least, nothing I can put my finger on. She was just kind of nosy and a little weird.

Adam She wasn't rude, was she?

Carolina No. She was really friendly. But not.

Adam Elisa has been acting a little strange lately. But she's often more aggressive or emotional around, you know, that time. PMS, perimenopause. Women and hormones. A dangerous combination.

Carolina If it weren't true I'd say that was sexist.

Adam Sorry.

Carolina Don't be. I understand. But your wife seems a little pissed off at you.

Adam So what else is new?

Carolina Do you think it's because of me? Do you think I should go? I don't want to...

Adam No. It's not you. She just met you. She wouldn't have said it's ok if it wasn't. She loves entertaining. It's me. She's annoyed with me. Something I did or didn't do. Like I said, she's been like this for a while.

Carolina That must be hard for you.

Adam One adapts. (Beat) No, I think you should stay. I want you to stay. It makes my life easier if you stay. Maybe she won't take a swipe at me if you're here.

Carolina Hey, if the fur starts flying I am out of here.

Adam No. It won't come to that. So don't worry. This is my struggle.

Carolina Your struggle to survive?

Adam (Laughs) Yeah. I guess you can say that. But have no fear. It won't be incessant. There will be other guests.

Carolina (Frowning) But, isn't death generally prompt?

Adam For some. But the vigorous and happy and healthy survive!

Carolina (Coyly) And multiply.

Adam Yes. And multiply.

Scene 5

Back in Africa and the garden. Now seen on even larger televisions, 36 inches maybe. The garden, though still green, is looking a little ragged and uncared for. Juliana struggles to carry both water and her child, who continues to cry. Juliana is thinner, more tired looking. The act of carrying the water has seemed to exhaust her. She puts the water down but does not pour it on the earth. Instead she sits, with the crying baby in one arm, her elbow on one knee and her head in her hands.

Elisa Sometimes I dream about Charles Darwin. I do. Not the sickly sagacious godlike figure of Victorian photography or Punch caricature. No. The Darwin of my dreams is a vigorous young man. Lean and resilient. A physical beauty. His hair is bleached by the tropical sun. His skin is reluctant brown. His ass and thighs are hard from riding horseback across the Pampas with the gauchos. His abs ripple and his biceps bulge from swinging a pickaxe and shoveling out dinosaurs in Punta Alta. He hikes and mountain climbs and hunts and hauls his finds across South America, with nary whimper or a cough. When I think of how strong and beautiful his body must have become from all that strenuous physical activity, my Beagle boy ceases to be so cerebral. Neither scurvy seaman, nor closet poofter Englishman is he. My Charles Darwin is a man. All man. He is the fittest man on board that ship. An unassuming Adonis. Beefcake in Victorian garb.

I'd do him. When I think of this romantic hunk, I would definitely do him. Which leads me to ask, what did he do? For those long five years of the Beagle's voyage? I mean, a virile young man in his mid twenties. Sailing around the great unknown. Tropical climes. Half naked native women. Closer to nature than he had ever dreamt of being, and the furthest away from English restraint? It is almost sacrilegious to wonder, but even saints have salacious thoughts. What did he do with his natural masculine urges? How did he

satisfy them? Did he take himself in hand? Or, is it a sailor's story of shore love 'em and leave 'em? Would DNA testing prove there to be extended members of the Darwin family scattered around the southern hemisphere today? Or was Darwin better than his biology? Did his religion and his morals and his class make him better than his randy, low life shipmates? Did his civilization make him better than his own base and savage needs. I find hard to believe that any man of any race would be too moral not to fuck when feeling free to do so. Maybe. Maybe my Charles was different. I know my Adam is not.

Sometimes in my dreams, Charles stands at the prow of the Beagle as it heaves along the English Channel towards Falmouth. The rain and seawater whipping his face, plastering his already thinning hair, his frayed and travel weary finery to his bronzed skin. He stands alone in the fierce night. His thoughts as turbulent as Nature, who rages like a lover left behind. As the lights of Falmouth swell and plunge closer and closer in the dark deluge, a panic rises in his chest. Where he has been, what he has seen, everything that he has done for the last five years of his life has made him ... a different man. Something wild has touched him. He has experienced the ecstasy of primal being and knows that he must tame his heart.

There are some experiences that he can never share. Some slates that can never be wiped clean. The deeds may die a thousand unknown deaths but the memories will always remain ... fresh in *his* mind.

I imagine him at landfall, stepping on to the English pier with the firm resolve to maintain a life long silence. He is, after all, a gentleman. She is in his blood and his nature cannot be so easily put from mind. There is one desire that sears beneath his

consciousness. It is a wife he says he wants. But all he really thinks about is ... sex.

Scene 6

Living room. Vancouver. A short while later. Another wall has fallen away to reveal more of the garden, which has begun to mirror the progress of the African garden. Fanny and Robert have arrived. Robert is large colorful man. Given his outfit, one could easily assume that he is a bit colorblind. Fanny, too, is a large person but she wears it well. Dressed a la Bea Arthur in *Maude*, her outfit flows. Mind you, she wears white and beige. She too has a large personality.

Fanny Sorry we're late. Robert forgot to pick me up.

Robert Smells good in here. Elisa is working her culinary magic.

Fanny Whatever it is, it's probably not low fat, low cal or low Carb. So don't go whole hawg. Remember, your diet.

Robert Now Fanny, don't start.

Fanny Fine. I won't say another word. Just know there's a special pit in hell for the gluttons. They'll shove a cherry in your mouth and an apple up your bum and baste you slowly with a sizzling pineapple glaze.

Robert That's cheap, Fanny. You can't just threaten me with hell in order to get your way.

Fanny It's not about my way, it's about your good health and longevity. You are obviously unperturbed by the prospect of death, or a broiling eternity.

Adam (Calling out) Elisa, the Bickersons are here!

Elisa (Entering) Hey!

Fanny Hey! (They hug. To Adam) We were not bickering. We were just having a marital moment. I am sure you two have your share.
(Hangs up her own coat)

Adam Good to see you too, Fanny.

Robert I'd stay out of her way tonight, Adam. My wife is definitely on about something.

Adam How you doing, man?

Robert Great. Good to see ya.

Elisa Did you get my messages? I left one at your house and at the yoga studio...

Fanny Oh, crap. Did you call? I didn't get anything at the studio. Robert, were there any messages from Elisa today?

Robert Uh, yes.

Fanny Why didn't you tell me?

Robert I forgot in all the hubbub.

Fanny And you wonder what I am on about. First you forget to pick me up. Now this? It's been like this all day. One communication fuck up after another. Mercury must be retrograde. So what's up?
(Notices Carolina) Oh? You didn't tell me there'd be other guests.

Robert Hello.

Adam I am sorry. (Introducing) Fanny. Robert. This is Carolina. One of my students.

Fanny Oh. (They shake hands)

Robert (All Charm) Very pleased to meet you, young lady.

Carolina Nice to meet you too.

Fanny You say that now but you might have a different opinion by the end of the evening.

Adam Wine? (Robert and Adam move into the living room. Fanny remains behind.)

Robert Red.

Adam Shiraz.

Robert I'm in.

Adam Fanny.

Fanny None for me thanks.

Adam Suit yourself.

Fanny So why did you call? What's up?

Elisa I can't explain now. I have to get back to the kitchen.

Fanny I'm coming too.

Elisa No. I have it all under control.

Carolina Let me get it. (Goes to wine, pours Robert a glass)

Robert That's sweet.

Elisa Just keep an eye on things for me. Ok?

Fanny (Raising an eyebrow) Oh? Ok, love. (Elisa exits. Fanny looks after her a bit quizzically, then moves into living room) Maybe I will have that glass after all.

Adam Suit yourself.

Fanny So where's Doddy tonight?

Adam Sleep over at Grandmas.

Fanny Oh? What's the occasion?

Adam I am not sure. It was Elisa's idea (To Robert) So how many souls did you save today, Robert?

Robert Just the ones you've damned, you devil. I see you are in the process of corrupting another young and fragile mind.

Adam I think the word you are looking for is educating.

Fanny Oh, so that's what you are calling it. (Carolina smiles at Fanny)

Robert Please tell me he is actually teaching you something useful?

Carolina Directed readings on Charles Darwin. (Hands Robert a glass)

Robert My poor child. How did me manage to infect you that archaic nonsense?

Carolina You disapprove of Darwin.

Robert Not at all. I just like to give Adam a hard time.

Adam Robert and I have known each other for many, many years. We have what you would call an antagonistic affection for each other. He antagonizes me, but I love him anyway.

Carolina Oh. I thought maybe you had that creationist/evolutionist thing going on.

Robert We've come a long way from the Scopes monkey trials. Well, some of us. I dare say there are a few of my colleagues who would never let the "E" word pass through their lips.

Carolina Are you saying you believe in evolution?

Robert I would be a fool not to believe.

Fanny It's just sex, you know.

Carolina Pardon me?

Fanny Evolution. It's all about sex. And death. Sex and death. Life.

Carolina But what about God? I mean, you're a ... a minister. Isn't the idea of evolution antithetical to the notion of Divine creation?

Robert Well, yes but...

Carolina So, how do you embrace evolutionary thought on one hand and preach from the bible, on the other?

Robert Because one is a matter of science and the other of faith. You ask a lot of questions.

Adam That's what makes her a good student.

Carolina Hey! Gotta keep my GPA up.

Fanny You don't say.

Carolina I am sorry. I am just trying to understand. I grew up in Abbotsford. My parents weren't fundamentalist but they had very strict views. I never thought about it before but meeting you, well ... flirting with Darwin, Darwinism ... well, it makes me feel ... Kinda naughty. My parents wouldn't freak, but they would disapprove. I know some people in their church would be shocked for sure.

Fanny The thrill of taboo. Verboten ideology. Academic aphrodisiac. Is that the attraction? Studying Darwin as a form of post adolescent rebellion?

Carolina Let's just say I am expanding my horizons.

Robert If it will help sooth your conscience, I think that whole creationist/evolutionist debate is just like the angels on the head of a pin question. Engaged in by people who have way too much time on their hands and take themselves and their beliefs far too seriously. Heck, even the Pope has spoken out in favor of evolutionary theory.

Carolina What kind of minister are you?

Robert Unitarian.

Adam Robert likes to have his cake and eat it too.

Robert Now who is antagonizing who?

Adam Come on Robert. You have to admit; your spiritual beliefs are a bit ... flexible.

Carolina Are you a Christian?

Robert I certainly am.

Adam And a Buddhist and a Jew, a bit of a Moslem ... Robert likes to flirt with everything.

Robert Why do I suddenly feel like a spiritual philanderer?

Adam If the shoe fits.

Robert Are you saying I am not a true believer? That I am some kind of an infidel? I may be guilty of a bit of enthusiastic pantheism, but I'll have you know that I am as faithful to my God as I am to my wife.

Adam Now that is interesting. I thought Unitarians didn't believe in God.

Fanny Oh, give it a rest you two. You are like a couple of apes, digging nits out of each other's hair. Can't the two of you find more interesting things to pick on each other about?

Carolina Oh, I find this interesting. Really.

Robert Unitarians have faith in what Darwinists believe. Or should believe in.

Adam And what is that?

Robert Connectedness. The interconnectedness of life on earth. Each species part complex web of interdependencies, including humanity. Every species related to each other and their place on earth, sharing history, present and future. Wasn't that one of Darwin's dangerous ideas? How beautiful is that? Those same ideas are at the heart of Unitarian Universalist thinking. Respect for that complex interdependent web of existence of which we are all a part.

Carolina I have never heard Unitarianism described in that way before.

Robert Well, it's a bit of an oversimplification. I had explain it in terms that Adam could understand. Charles Darwin is his prophet. The Origin of Species is his bible. And Adam can be as dour and fanatical as an ayatollah.

Adam I am not dour.

Carolina I am sorry, professor Wallace. I have been meaning to say something ...

Adam Hey!

Robert The only point I was trying to make is that Adam and I believe the same thing. Fundamentally. We just relate to it differently. The story of the world. I try to remain open, to look for the divine everything. If it's all connected, then everything is divine. Even our thoughts, because they lead to actions which effect everything around us. Including our spirit.

Fanny Adam and his cronies would like to think that Darwin dreamt that idea upon his own. Sure. Credit the white guy for discovering what everyone else already knew. Everything in life is connected and everything in life is dependent upon each other. The aboriginal peoples of the world always had it together. Only we called them savages not scientists. Shows what we know. We needed a genius to figure it out. And we still shit where we eat.

Adam In Darwin's defense I have to say that there is a difference between divining knowledge from a vision one has in a sweat lodge and actually being able to provide the scientific evidence to make it indisputable fact.

Fanny You know Adam, you have a real problem of believing nothing until it is proven. It keeps you from considering things, important things, which cannot be proved in the same way and which, if true, are likely to be beyond your comprehension.

Adam Ow! In any case connectedness is corollary in Darwin's theories. Natural selection. That's the big ticket. Sexual selection. Descent through modification.

Carolina Survival of the fittest.

Fanny Ah yes. The struggle to survive. Life as an endless game of king of the hill and the justification for the colonization and exploitation of millions globally. We're bigger, stronger, more powerful and so you're fucked brother.

Adam (Defensive) That is not what it means. It's about success. Reproductive success. And being adapted or the ability to adapt quickly to changes in the environment.

Fanny But that is what your Darwinism has come to mean. Only the strong or rich survive. Get out of your head, Adam. Look around and smell the shit.

Adam Why do I feel under attack?

Fanny I am sorry. I just can't stand bullshit intellectual rationalization for a lot of inexcusable bad behavior.

Carolina What if it's the truth?

Fanny You have a lot to learn about the truth.

Robert I don't care about what a man thinks as much as how his thoughts and ideas lead him to relate to the world around him. Do his ideas lead him to feel cut off or connected to his environment and the other lives that inhabit it?

Some one who thinks they live in a cold and hostile universe, governed by indifference, will be equally hostile and indifferent to the world around them. They'll horde themselves away, acting self-centeredly, with little thought or care for how their dog eat dog actions affect others, as long as they themselves are gratified. What a lonely, lonely existence.

On the other hand, the person who seeks to tap into that greater pulse of life, the self transcendent being, who sees everything as part of one great totality, will have a strong sense of "at oneness", of the connections between people and places and other living beings. See themselves as part of a great circle of interdependency. Not just reliant upon, but responsible to and for every thing that makes up their world. That person will see the suffering and the struggles of others of their own.

But so many of us are lost, disconnected, blind to everything except our own desire or anguish. It is this sense of one's self as separate and isolated from others that gives rise to a host of human ills – discrimination, destructive arrogance, acquisitiveness, even the ravaging of the natural environment. (Elisa enters with a tray of nibblies) When I was young, I thought my job was about

conversion, shepherding lost souls out of the darkness and into the light of our lord Jesus Christ . . .

- Elisa No disrespect Rev, but you were quite the bible banger.
- Adam/Robert Elisa! There you are.
- Elisa (She affectionately rubs Roberts head setting plate of nibblies on coffee table) No. Don't get up.
- Fanny Hi, darling. You ok?
- Elisa I'm fine.
- Fanny Here. Sit with me.
- Elisa It's ok. I'll sit here. (She joins Adam)
- Robert You're right, Elisa. I was a caricature of myself. (To Carolina) Do you know what they used to call me behind my back?
- Adam And to your face?
- Robert Oral Roberts.
- Fanny Better than Anal Roberts.
- Robert Fanny!
- Fanny What?
- Robert But now I see my job is much broader, more of a spiritual facilitator than a crusader. To help people get outside of themselves, their greed, their suffering, their own private hell and gently steer them towards some kind of connection with this great web of life.
- Carolina So what changed?

Robert I met this delicate flower of beauty and wisdom.

Fanny Oh, cut the crap. You had what can only be called a “mid faith crisis”.

Carolina What’s that?

Fanny A midlife crisis with less collateral damage.

Robert Ok. You’re right. That I met you at the same time was a coincidence. A happy coincidence.

Adam You had a crisis of faith? I didn’t know that.

Robert I really didn’t think that the general malaise I was feeling in my life should be fodder for your entertainment. I kept my turmoil and despair to myself thank you very much.

There comes a time in everyone’s life when one profoundly questions the meaning and value of their existence. It is a process that is often slow, gradual and sometimes unseen. Punctuated with a sudden turn of events. A crisis. I looked upon it as a period of development and have come to understand that a crisis of faith, or belief if you will, comes to all of us. It is a vehicle that the divine will use to let us see ourselves, to build and make us. Not to tear us down .

But any questions I had about my faith were dispelled the moment Fanny walked into my life. She was like a trumpet from the heavens sounding the wake up call. An angel.

Fanny You’re laying it on a bit thick.

Robert You are my angel. If I hadn’t met you I’d still be stuck in my Anglican rut. You set me on a new path, and as I walked along beside you, I saw that all roads lead to the divine. Mind you, I have had to get my head out of my butt, as you would say.

Fanny (Aside) I'd say ass.

Robert I had to change a few of my ways, face some overwhelming truths. It's been quite a journey, but as a result, my faith is much stronger and I am better able to do the Lord's work and serve my fellow man.

Elisa The way you speak of Fanny is quite beautiful. Loving, really. And honestly, how many of us are willing to face the truth of our lives. Even when you know it, when it stares you in the face. It usually takes something drastic to wake you up. A crisis. Even then, most of us still cling to denial. I think it takes a certain amount of courage to confront your personal truths or to act on them. Don't you, Adam?

Adam (To Robert, making light) Cut it out, man. You're making the rest of us guys look bad,

Robert Hey. I've got one for you. One day a zookeeper notices an orangutan reading two books – the Bible and The Origin of Species. So he asks the ape, "Why are you reading both those books?" "Well", says the orangutan, "I just wanted to know if I was my brothers keeper or my keepers brother!" (They laugh)

Carolina I didn't know apes could read.

Robert Work with me here. It's a joke.

Adam Not a very good one.

Robert Better than the one you told me the other day. (To Carolina) Why did the dinosaur cross the road?

Carolina Why?

Adam The chicken hadn't evolved yet.

Robert Ba-dum-bump!

Carolina (Laughing) You're right. That's not any better.

Fanny (Dryly) But you're laughing.

Carolina And you're not.

Fanny I have heard them both before. (She sips her wine)

Adam (To Carolina) More wine?

Robert I'll get it. (Fanny rolls her eyes) Evolution is a very serious subject, young lady. It helps to bring a little levity to the subject.

Fanny That Charles Darwin! He's a real Chris Rock. His theories are a laugh riot. Woohoo!

Robert Now Fanny. Don't be blasphemous. At least, not in the man's home.

Adam She's right. Darwin and his theories are a bit on the ... dry side. But I try my best to make them as accessible and entertaining as possible for my students.

Carolina What is the funniest thing about Darwin? Darwinism?

Elisa Barnacles.

Carolina Barnacles?

Elisa Yes. Darwin was big into barnacles. He's still the world's foremost authority. Isn't that right, Adam? The original Barnacle Bill.

Adam She's right.

Carolina What's so funny about barnacles?

Elisa (Elisa attempting to be entertaining but as the speech continues, she rapidly advances to the edge of hysteria) Well, everyone, that is every one interested in Barnacles, believed that they were hermaphroditic. How they got their little legs open and came to that conclusion, I don't know. But Darwin is dissecting these barnacles. No bigger than a head of a pin. And the first thing Darwin discovers is that these particular barnacles are not hermaphrodites at all. They are female. They are all female. So he's looking at this female barnacle under the microscope and notices all these tiny things attached to her, little tiny things just hanging off of her. First he thinks they're cilia. You know, the little hairs that help cellular and smaller organisms move around? But no. These things aren't hair at all. They're men. The male barnacles. How does he know they the male? They are sex organs. A penis. That's it. No body, no brains, no guts. Just penis. The male barnacle is just a penis. Two or three or more will attach themselves to the female, any female floating by a live off her like a parasite. Have little sword fights amongst them selves to see who wins the right to procreate. Nature had done away with all the extraneous bits and distilled masculinity down to it definitive essence. A dick. Men are just dicks. The little head that rules the big head nine times out of ten.

(Everyone just stares at Elisa)

Fanny Well, that certainly gives credence to that old feminist joke: what do you call that useless piece of skin hanging off the end of a penis?
A man!

Robert Fanny!

Fanny What? You boys have your jokes. We gals have ours.

Elisa Well, I thought it was funny. (Beat) Dinner is ready. Adam, why don't you take your friend into the dining room and get her seated.

Carolina You need some help serving?

Elisa No. Fanny will help.

Robert (Offering his arm) Why don't you come with me, my dear? You are in for a culinary treat. Elisa is an artist is in the kitchen. (They exit)

Fanny What is it with old men? Put a young woman in the room and they act like fools.

Adam I'll grab some more wine.
(Adam exits)

Fanny So? How are you doing, Elisa? Honestly.

Elisa I don't know, Fanny. I really don't know.

Fanny Why, sweetie? What's going on? Tell me.

Elisa This isn't the time, Fanny.

Fanny (Insistent) Tell me.

Elisa (Beat) Adam had been...screwing around.

Fanny What? No.

Elisa He has been unfaithful.

Fanny How do you know? Did you find something? See something? Catch him with someone?

Elisa No, not exactly. I . . . I just know it.

Fanny Female intuition?

Elisa Something like that.

Fanny Oh, baby. (Beat) Do you think it is that girl?

Elisa I don't know. Maybe. I don't know. She was here when I got here. Adam invited her to stay.

Fanny That doesn't mean anything. Look I've known you both a long time. Adam can be an idiot sometimes but I know he wouldn't do something stupid like that. He loves you and Doddy. He has a good thing going here and at the university. She's young. She's pretty. But she is Adam's student. He wouldn't put it all on the line.

Adam (Adam pops his head in) You ladies coming?

Elisa We'll be right there. (Adam exits)

Fanny Every marriage has its problems. Whatever it is, you two love each other. I know your will work it out.

Elisa You don't know Fanny. You just don't know.

(Elisa exits. Fanny pauses a moment and then follows)

Scene 7

Africa. On larger screens yet. The garden, which is showing the early signs of bearing fruit, has commenced to turn brown at the edges, as if it has not been watered for some time. The baby cries and cries as sick children often do. Juliana is slimmer yet. Clearly fatigued. She sweats profusely. She attempts to wipe the sweat away with the hem of her skirt, but it is an arduous task that seemingly takes forever and all her strength. It is a pointless endeavor. The sweat continues to pour off her. Juliana is sick like her child and she is scared. She looks at her garden and is losing hope. She begins to cry.

Elisa Charles Darwin has a secret. Something he doesn't want anyone to know. Something he hides from the rest of the world and it eats him up inside. His stomach churns. He ralphs and farts and runs.

His heart palpitates, and his endless questing mind plagues him with headaches and insomnia.

The doctors don't know what it is. What makes him feel so ill all the time? But his wife knows. Wives know everything. What else would cause a man to chew Roloids like candy and drink Pepto Bysmal by the bottle except ... fear? And what fears should a husband have that are not shared with his wife?

Emma Darwin knows her husband's dirty little secret. Her house stinks of barnacles and truth. He spends his days sequestered in his study lost in thoughts of Nature, his one true love. And Emma stands outside the door, desperately trying to retain her trust and strength and faith. She dare not knock and shatter his intimacies, impose herself between them. She knows he is an important man and should not interrupt his work. And so she moves on, taking comfort in the fact that she bears his children and his secrets, even if she cannot command the fullness of his heart.

Sometimes, at night, he rests his head upon her naked breast and sobs with shame and misery. "This poor man. This poor, poor open man. How can he help himself?" Through tears and sorrow he pours out all his fears, "Don't tell anyone. Don't tell a soul, Emma. If anyone should find out ... I don't want to hurt you. Or the children ..." And so she promises to keep her silence until his death, so that he may sleep a little better. But I know she lies awake, trying not to curse what has come between them.

It is a wife's duty to keep her husbands secrets. Secrets and children are the burden women bear.

Scene 8

Vancouver. Another wall has fallen away and it would appear as if the living room is in the garden. It also reveals an enormous projection

screen where the upstage wall has been. The diners have reassembled post diner for coffee and dessert. Elisa an attentive hostess, does the domestic thing required in domestic attendance, but is quiet watchful. Never really taking her eyes off Adam and Carolina. Fanny and Adam are in the middle of a heated debate.

Fanny Don't even talk to me about Africa, Adam. That poor beleaguered continent. You ever notice that the shape of it is just like a human skull in profile. Only with the back of it's head bashed in? And that is exactly what we've done to it over the centuries. Kicked its brain in.

Adam That doesn't preclude the fact that it is an excellent contemporary example of the various natural checks and balances to excessive population growth – war, famine and disease.

Fanny Africa is dying and you would write it off as natural causes? What about the impact of slavery, European colonialism, Western imperialism, not to mention globalization and plain old indifference to human suffering? How natural is that?

Carolina In the struggle to survive, competition is fiercest among members of the same species.

Adam Right. Within the human species, nations are locked in that same struggle.

Fanny Social Darwinist bullshit.

Adam Stop being such a bleeding heart and try to be objective for a moment.

Fanny Excuse me?

Adam There is nothing unique about Africa. Whether you like it or not, we're all competing for the same resources – food, water, shelter,

space – the fundamentals of our existence. Better life conditions so that our offspring may grow. Maybe prosper. Flourish. Produce more offspring, with a greater likelihood of survival. It doesn't matter where the competition arises or the ideological basis behind human struggle. It's just the way things are.

Fanny Have you ever been to Africa?

Adam No.

Carolina I have. My parents took me to Kenya when I was a teenager. It was absolutely stunning. We went on Safari. The most beautiful landscape I have ever seen. And the wild life...

Fanny What about the people?

Carolina They seemed nice enough, I guess. It was so long ago, I don't really remember. Outside of our guides and the hotel staff, we didn't really have much contact. But I remember the children. They were really cute.

Fanny That's the problem. We don't see the people. We see the gold and the diamonds and the coffee and the cocoa and the elephants and the tigers. We see Africa as a wealth of natural resources, but we don't see the people.

Carolina Have you been?

Fanny Yes. And it wasn't for a fucking Safari.

Robert Fanny was an arbiter for the Canadian Government. Part of a delegation sent to monitor the first free elections in South Africa and the transition from Apartheid to democracy.

Carolina Oh. That must have been exciting.

Fanny It was eye opening. In six month I received an education to last three lifetimes. I actually thought all those years of protests and boycotts and sanctions meant something. That I was there to help broker a hard won peace and freedom. That I was doing some good. And when the election finally happened and Mandela became president, I drank and danced in the streets along with everyone else. Patted myself on the back for a job well done.

But then Mitterrand came to switch the power on to 250,000 homes in the townships, the whole system designed and constructed by a French company. Not one South African rand in the project – just French. It suddenly hit me. All I was really doing was help pave the way for the legions of foreign trade representatives who were flocking into the country looking for investments, the same people who invested in apartheid and kept the hated racist regime alive. Apartheid had ended, not for justice or equality or any humanitarian reason. But for politics and profit.

Adam Come on Fanny. Apartheid had to end for some reason. And the purpose of those boycotts was to impact the Apartheid regime economically. Investment is needed to rebuild their economy.

Fanny But what about the people? You should have seen them dancing in the streets. The jubilation, the celebration, the hope in the eyes of the people that danced around me. African children so malnourished their naturally black hair had turned blond, hoping that change would mean more to eat. Battered and raped women hoping that change would bring some respite from a crushing cycle of poverty and abuse. Men, irate and frustrated by decades of racist fear and oppression, hoping that change would finally bring the opportunities to be the masters of their own fate. People so tired of all the shit, they wanted to believe the world will give them a break. What would you say to those people, Adam? Sorry, there probably won't be any more jobs flowing out of industry, and you won't be

able to buy a house anytime soon, or get a better education for your children, or put more food on the table because whether you live under apartheid or not, you still live in a world where you where the competition for your resources and your wealth is so fierce that no one really cares because we're all engaged in the struggle to survive!?

Adam Look, Fanny. I am not saying that I agree with the way things are in Africa. I am just saying that's the way things are, scientifically.

Carolina (To Fanny) How long ago was that?

Fanny 10 years.

Carolina Have you been back since?

Fanny No. I'd be too ashamed to show my face. Or should I say, my bleeding heart.

Carolina Well, 10 years is a long time. Maybe some good was done. Maybe things are better.

Fanny For a few, probably. But my guess is that the majority is no better off today. It'll be generations before the effects of apartheid are diminished.

Robert And throw the AIDS epidemic into the mix.

Fanny Devastating. The best and the brightest mowed down in their prime. Millions and millions of children orphaned and left to fend and defend themselves. And most countries without a strong infrastructure capable of dealing with the crisis ... Devastating!

Adam There you go. Disease. Kind of proves my point.

Carolina What I don't understand is how this virus suddenly appears out of nowhere and spreads so fast. Is this like an evolutionary first?

Adam AIDS itself is nothing new. There are similar viruses that infect a variety of species. But what is new is that for the first time in evolutionary history, genes and time come together on a human scale. AIDS is change seen through a microscope. Descent through modification made visible. It mutates at an incredible rate, making it highly adaptive. And natural selection seizes on each new adaptation. That's why it is difficult to find a cure. (Elisa begins to look annoyed)

Robert But AIDS is new to mankind. It jumped species, didn't it? Like civet cats and SARS. I saw a documentary about it the other night on The Passionate Eye. Polio vaccines cultured on the kidneys of monkeys and tested on thousands and thousands of unsuspecting people in the Congo region.

Adam A conspiracy theory the scientific community rejects. There is no conclusive link between HIV and the polio vaccine trials in Africa.

Fanny What do you expect them to say Adam? Sorry, millions of people are dying because we fucked up. Could you imagine the lawsuits? Easier to claim innocence and point the finger elsewhere. Beside, Africa has been a petri dish for western science for ages. A continental Tuskegee. Oh, and guess where they're testing AIDS vaccines in development? Not San Francisco.

Adam The truth is probably far simpler. Those people have been butchering and eating monkeys for centuries. You see how easy it is to contract AIDS from a needle prick. The simian virus could have simply crossed over into our species though contaminated monkey blood entering the cut on a hunter's thumb. It has probably been circulating through the human population for generations.

Fanny Yeah, right. As quickly as this disease is spreading, the entire African continent would be infected or dead by now.

Adam Not if the outbreaks had been contained. If my theoretical hunter lived in a small village, remote and somewhat inaccessible, he would have died an unremarkable death. He would have infected his wife, maybe even his kids, the local prostitute, who may even have infected other men, their wives, their girlfriends etc. In that way, the disease could have spread, silently for years, unnoticed. Circulating within a contained geographical area. Written off as other ailments, or bad magic by the local witch doctor.

Robert I saw another documentary, about loggers in the Amazon coming down with strange illnesses. Viruses that had never been seen before, and living quietly in the remote jungle only to be disturbed by human activity.

Carolina Yeah. And what's that other disease? The really gruesome one? The one that makes you bleed from every organ. Ebola]

Adam Yes. Hemorrhagic fever. It is exactly like that.

Robert Can you imagine what would happen if that got out into the world?

Adam AIDS is a disease of social change. Of promiscuity and travel. Urbanization. Planes, trains and automobiles. Free love. Think. People moving from the country to crowded cities – people from the cities moving to other countries. Nothing is far from anywhere, any more. Arbitrary national boundaries are ignored. Natural barriers constantly breached. Cultural mores frequently shifting and are often abandoned. And everywhere, people having sex. That's what we do. HIV is well adapted to sexual transmission. In the gay community alone the numbers were staggering. Some of those guys were having upwards of two hundred and fifty partners a year. And they tell two hundred and fifty friends, and so on and so on and there is your pandemic.

Carolina The Herbal Essence approach to epidemiology.

Fanny I doubt the average African slept with that many people a year.

Carolina Prostitutes, maybe.

Adam But you still get explosive transmission rates with smaller numbers. Only a slower, more insidious growth, accumulating and accelerating over time. Come on, Elisa. Help me out here.

Elisa Adam, I don't I want to get into this.

Carolina Isn't this your area of expertise? I'd be interested in hearing what you have to say.

Robert Yes, Elisa. You've been unusually quiet.

Elisa You haven't exactly been driving the conversation yourself.

Robert I've been digesting that fabulous meal, my dear. Listening and digesting.

Fanny I told you not to over eat!

Robert Oh, Fanny. Don't start.

Elisa I am not sure that I agree with you, Adam? I don't think Africans are any more promiscuous than North Americans.

Adam You're always saying that until Africans learn to control their behaviors, AIDS will continue to spread out of control.

Elisa I know. And it embarrasses me.

Adam Why?

Elisa Because when you say it back to me like that it sounds wrong. Wrong in a way that it shocks me that I could even think like that. AIDS is not about Africans, it's about people. *People* need to change.

Adam Perhaps, but we are talking about Africa, where the epidemic is raging out of control.

Carolina We're all human, right. But there are differences between us, beyond the obvious – cultures, traditions, societal differences – that are significant.

Elisa Are they? Maybe it is because of the obvious differences that we think all the others are important. When they are not.

Adam You have to admit that there are certain African traditions, sexual traditions that only advance the spread of AIDS. Like polygamy, wife inheritance, dry sex...

Fanny Mormons are polygamous. And nothing is wilder, sexually, than the North American tradition of Spring Break. And as for dry sex ... well, it's been my experience that most men would just as soon do away with foreplay.

Robert And what experience is that?

Fanny Puullease. I had a life before you, Robert.

Elisa If AIDS is a disease of promiscuity, Adam, then whose? Men's or women's?

Adam I'd say both. We are sexual animals.

Elisa But a woman doesn't need to sleep with scores of men to contract HIV. Just one. And as for social change, I'd say that it is the lack of change that has enabled HIV to spread uncontrollably. The majority of people infected with HIV globally are women. Not because of their sexual freedom but as a matter of ongoing female sexual victimization. Crushing poverty that forces girls and women to sell the only commodity they have. Wars that make female

bodies disputed territory to be razed and conquered. Innocent girlfriends, wives and mothers, casualties of male philandering.

Robert So you're saying that men are responsible for the spread of AIDS?

Elisa Yes. In one way or another.

Carolina I don't think you can blame the entire AIDS epidemic on men.

Fanny She just did.

Carolina But I don't think that it is fair. I am not being anti feminist. I'm just saying that women play a role in the spread of this disease. We're talking about heterosexual AIDS here. Men had to get it from somewhere. So I don't think you can make that generalization.

Fanny You can if you're talking male dominated societies, which are the majority. If not all.

Elisa And that is my point. African men, Asian men, European men, North American men, all share the same extent of sexual freedom, the same sense of sexual entitlement. In the end, I don't think it matters where AIDS came from. Only that it is with us now and that we adapt to it as it adapts to us.

Adam In about a thousand years. It will be 30, 40 generations before humanity develops a natural immunity to HIV.

Fanny Which sort of blows your theory that it has been circulating through the African population for centuries out of the water. There would have been some form of adaptation by now.

Elisa By that time, HIV will spread around and around the globe, leaving billions of dead in its wake.

AIDS spreads from mother to child in utero. Children born that never reach maturity. Where are the successive generations needed

for biological adaptation to come? Natural selection requires a population to select from? No. HIV presents an evolutionary dead end for all humanity. I think it is a waste of time sitting around waiting for science to save us with a cure or a vaccine. And we have no time to wait for biological adaptation. Certainly, Africa will become so destabilized by this disease, it will have exploded from death and civil unrest long before that.

Fanny Maybe that is what the Western world is waiting for, all the Africans to die or kill themselves off so we can move in and gorge on their resources without any opposition.

Elisa AIDS is a preventable disease. Since men of all races find it impossible to abstain from sex or be faithful in their relationships and marriages, the emphasis must be placed on condoms – the male use of a condom during all forms of non-procreative sex. The one small change of habit that would save a lot of lives, maybe alter the seeming deadend course of our species.

Robert Safe sex. Sounds simple enough.

Elisa You'd think so. But most men would rather risk their lives, and the lives of their loved ones, for those seven minutes of pleasure.

Adam I'd like to think it's a little longer than that.

Carolina Excuse me. But all this feels just a bit alarmist.

Elisa There're 45 million people living with HIV. More than half of that number is female. I'd say that's alarming.

Carolina You're right. That is terrible. It really is. But what you are suggesting is apocalyptic.

Fanny That is more than the entire population of Canada. Can you imagine everyone in Canada infected with HIV? I mean, think about it for a moment.

Elisa How would you like to wake up one morning and find yourself a part of that statistic?

Carolina But that wouldn't happen here.

Elisa Why not?

Carolina Because we're not like those countries in Africa. We're a rich country, a peaceful country. We have universal health care and good education and support organizations and economic alternatives for our poor. Even the women here have choices. Whether we choose to exercise them or no. We even teach safe sex in high schools. We're different. Culturally, morally, behaviorally different. I mean some of things you read in the paper, like gang raping babies and little boys because they think sex with virgins will cure them. That wouldn't happen here.

Robert Those are actions of people driven by ignorance and fear. For which we must have compassion.

Carolina Compassion? Come on. I mean, how sick and uncivilized is that?

Fanny As sick as a father molesting his own child and posting the pictures on the internet. As sick as Canadian tourists traveling to the Third World countries to fuck other people's children.

Adam Ok. This conversation has just taken a turn for the worse.

Fanny You started it.

Adam Can I get anybody anything?

Carolina Yes. Those things happen here. But nowhere near the extent as in Africa. We're different. Different people. We behave differently.

Robert Sadly, the spread of HIV is far less dramatic.

Elisa You really believe that we are so different? Africans and Canadians.

Carolina Well, yes. Racially. Culturally . . .

Elisa You think that Canadian men behave differently from African men? That men anywhere are willing to protect themselves and their partners during sex?

Carolina Definitely. Every one knows that African men are unwilling to wear a condom. That's why I avoid them like the plague.

Elisa And Canadian men do?

Carolina No disrespect, but you're a lot older than me. And you are married. But my girlfriends and I, we're young and out there in the sexual trenches. If a man won't use a condom, I won't sleep with him. All the men I know are just fine with that. They carry them. And that condom only comes off when I am in a committed relationship.

Elisa How do you know you are in a committed relationship?

Carolina Well, if I have been seeing a man for a long while. And we are not sleeping with anyone else. My boyfriend, Francis and I, I mean, we lived together before he left for the Galapagos. We weren't married but we agreed to be exclusive.

Elisa What if either of you broke that agreement?

Carolina You have to know the person. You have to trust. And they have to trust you.

Fanny Trust? Sex as an honor system? God help me. No wonder women your age are in the highest risk group.

Carolina Look. You have to be selective. If I don't think an man is safe for any reason, I won't sleep with him. If a man is from foreign country, especially one of those that have been identified as high risk, I won't sleep with him. If a man claims to be bisexual, I won't sleep with him. If a man uses drugs stronger than pot, I won't sleep with him . . .

Elisa And if a man is married?

Carolina Pardon me?

Elisa Are married men safe to sleep with?

Carolina Well, I guess that would depend on the man.

Elisa Fanny is right. We look at Africa and we don't really see the people. They are there. But they are like shadows. Abstractions. In fact, the whole continent is like one giant abstraction. I go to work everyday and I think I am doing something special for those people over there. I feel sorry for them because they are poor and ignorant. Because they look different, I assume that they act differently. Sexually. Maybe I think African men are highly sexualized. They do have bigger penises. Right? Maybe I think African women are too sexually permissive. Otherwise the disease wouldn't have reached epidemic proportions. And maybe I think a thousand other erroneous thoughts that permit me think that I am so much better, so much safer, because I am a white woman and I live where I live and how I live and I am not gay or a hooker or a junkie and I am not like them! But what makes me any different? What makes me different from some poor black woman dying in Africa? Is it my culture? My education? Medicine? My moral standards? My sexual traditions? No. We're exactly like them. We dress it up differently, but the behaviors are all the same.

Adam Elisa?

Elisa Yes, Adam.

Adam More wine?

Elisa No, Adam. I think I have had enough. You know Carolina, Francis could return from the Galapagos, swearing undying love and fidelity, but having had his way with every boobie and iguana on every island, and you would never know. Listen, I remember what it was like to be young and pretty and desired by men from the age of 17 to 70. Back in those antediluvian days when love was free and skinless, when sex was just a numbers game of chase, catch and kiss. When marriage became a choice for women and not just a necessity for survival. I was fearless. We were all fearless. I made my choice and I felt safe. Not because I had escaped the trickle that's become a deluge of sexually transmitted death. I honestly believed that I had found my mate, my home, and my niche in life as wife and mother. Call me a dinosaur, but that is all I ever wanted. But believe me when I tell you that sex has changed. Old married women are taking their chances. Nothing is safe or sacred. Wedding vows are no protection. Even marriage is a roulette game that comes up double zeros.

Fanny What do you mean?

Elisa I went to the doctor today. (Pause) I tested HIV positive.

(Cutting through their stunned silence is the wail of the baby)

Scene 9

Back in Africa. Now projected on the larger screen. The garden is brown and dry and brittle. It is not dead yet, flecks of green can still be seen, but they are sparse and the fruit is shriveling on the vine. Juliana is as thin as a rake. Her hollowed face is covered with cheesy bumps and her eyes,

huge in their recessed sockets are tremendously sad and without hope. She can barely stand or walk and yet she still clutches her baby. Her face contorts with pain and her body contracts with a spasm and her clothes the bottom half of her clothing is wet with diahorrea shit. She gently collapses to the ground, folding like a house of cards that can no longer hold itself up. But always she is protective of the baby. She painfully pushes herself up into a twisted sitting position and raises her head to the heavens. She tries to reach out and through the tears that rolls down her face....

Juliana (Swahili) God, save us.

(This image remains frozen through out the ensuing scenes.)

Elisa God and love. God and Love. The two most complicating factors in all of human history. Both fill your heart and cloud your eyes, obscuring the fundamental godless, loveless truth. Cold and impersonal. Like nature, always waiting to reveal herself to those who dare to look. What you do in the dark comes out in the light. Between dark and light. The truth will always out.

Charles Darwin and I. Like two Mendelian peas in a pod, one green, and one yellow. Did we really think we were the ones and only? I looked with out seeing. No. That's not right. I saw what I saw. But not wanting to trust that seeing is believing, I looked away and struggled to maintain faith in what had already proven itself to be faithless. But what is a wife to do without the evidence to support a truth she only senses? Instead, I left my doubts unspoken and hid them in my heart.

Charles saw it too. The truth buried in the sediment and re-forming over time. And he too struggled within himself to reconcile everything that he believed with everything he saw. Like me he tried to look away, but could not help but see the same recurring

patterns connecting through out life, his old world crumbling with uncertainties as new blasphemous ideas were taking shape in his mind. Asking himself, as I ask myself, “What’s God or love got to do with it?” But still, not daring to publicly articulate what he could not substantiate. His illness and my sadness branching from a tree that shares the same roots.

I wonder if he sat as I sat in the doctor’s office that day. His face, ghost white with stunning incredulity. Alfred Wallace’s manuscript on natural selection, just like my lab results, falling from his limp hands. Did Darwin really think he’d be the only one to see, to know, natures dirty little secret. My licentious monkey of a husband, his shape shifting whore of a mistress, Natural selection and infidelity, our hidden truths exposed by relative strangers. Charles Darwin and I, two unwitting cuckolds, smacked in the face by our own inactivity. We had the knowledge. How much more proof did we need?

God and love holding us up for all these years. What’s God, what’s love got to do with it? Absolutely nothing.

Extracting God from his thinking, Darwin finds his evolutionary theories work. Extracting love from the equation of my marriage, my course of action becomes clear. I take his hand and armed with truth and proof, we proceed together towards an uncertain future.

Scene 10

Vancouver. Living room. The silence breaks.

Adam What the hell are you talking?

Carolina You’re having us on. Right?

Elisa I tested HIV positive.

Fanny This is what you ... Holy crap!

Robert I don't understand. How did this . . .? (Beat) Oh.

Fanny Why didn't you say something? Why didn't you tell me?

Adam She didn't even tell me. Why the hell should she tell you?

Robert Fanny, I think we better go.

Adam Yes. My wife and I need to talk.

Elisa No. Stay. Please. I want them to stay, Adam. They are our friends.
And right now, I think we can use their support.

Fanny Whatever you want, Elisa. We are here for you.

Robert Well, yes. For both of you.

Carolina If you are ... then he is ... Whoa. This is heavy.

Elisa I am sorry, Adam. I really didn't want it come out like this. I should
have told you before. But I wanted to be certain, to be sure of what
I was really dealing with here.

Adam Elisa, do we have to do this in public?

Elisa When do you give me the chance to do this in private? You're never
here. And when you are here, Doddy is home. Or you are too busy,
or too preoccupied ...

Adam You better go, Carolina.

Fanny I think you should stay, young lady.

Adam Stay out of this, Fanny.

Elisa I want her a part of this.

Carolina Look. I have nothing to with this.

Elisa We're all a part of this.

Adam Then, I am leaving. I don't have to take this crap. (Goes for his coat)

Elisa You walk out that door right now, you make sure you have everything you need because there is no coming back.

Robert Adam, sit down. Everyone. Just calm down. We can get this all sorted out if we just remain calm. Come on Adam. Sit. Buddy? Please sit. Sit down. (To Carolina) You too. (Adam comes back into the room with his coat. Carolina sits too) Now every one just take a deep breath. (They calm for the moment) OK. Now, I am a bit in the dark here. All Fanny told me is that you two were having a bit of trouble. And whatever it is I want to help. You are our friends and we love you. Both of you. Unconditionally. So let us help, ok?

(Elisa nods her head. Adam just looks away but doesn't protest. Carolina is just trapped like a deer in the headlights by the situation)

But if we're going to be of any help we need to know what's going on here. Adam?

Adam I haven't got a fucking clue.

Robert Elisa?

Elisa A couple of weeks ago, I went to the gynecologist for my yearly pap smear. When the results were in she called me back to her office and informed me that I had Chlamydia. A sexually transmitted disease. And I ... I haven't had sex with anyone except you, Adam, for the last 15 years of my life. I didn't say anything to you because I didn't know what to say. I didn't know what to do. I guess I was in

shock. Anyway, the doctor did STD screen, including an HIV test, just in case there was anything else that need treatment. Then she called me back in and told me that I tested positive for HIV. She told me not to panic and that she'd do another test to be sure, it was not a false positive. But I panicked. I was afraid I was going to die. That we were going to die. And what was going to happen to Doddy? Who would take care of Doddy? And your mother is so old ... I wanted to tell you. I have wanted to say something. I was too afraid. Of what I might say. Of what I might do.

Adam I don't get it, Elisa. I am sorry but I just don't get it. I don't get why you have to do it this way. In front of every body. In front of Carolina, my student.

Elisa You invited her.

Adam But you could have said something, instead of embarrassing me this way.

Elisa You never gave me the chance. I thought I could keep it in for just another day. But I couldn't. I just couldn't. Anyway, why are you worried about her or what she thinks? I am your wife. (Beat) Are you in love with her?

Adam No.

Elisa But you're sleeping with her.

Carolina No. It's not what you think. We haven't had sex. We were just friendly. Really, friendly.

Elisa But you would have slept with him. Wouldn't you? (Carolina is silent) Are you in love with him?

Carolina No. No. (Beat) Not really.

Elisa So what the hell did you think you were doing?

Carolina I just ... I was just trying to have some fun. It doesn't mean anything.

Elisa To you. But this is my marriage and my life.

Carolina I am sorry. I am really, really sorry. I was just hurt. I was hurting. Francis isn't coming back. At least to me and ... I was sad. Really sad. All the time. I was flunking out. Adam. He was so nice to me. So concerned. He seemed to care. Made me feel good about myself. I just wanted to feel good about myself. Have some fun. I am sorry, Elisa. Mrs. Wallace. I am truly sorry. I didn't mean to cause any trouble.

Elisa I understand those feelings. I think we all have shared them, at some point in our lives. I think we all just want the same thing. To feel good. To feel loved.

Carolina Thank you.

Elisa Get out of here. I don't want to hear your name or see your face again. (Carolina goes and grabs her coat and starts to head off) Just be careful with your life, with your love. Choose the wrong person and you lose both.

(Carolina exits. There is a long awkward pause. Fanny and Robert are a bit bewildered. Elisa just stares at Adam. Adam looks anywhere but at Elisa)

Elisa So what about me, Adam? What about me? Do you love me?

Adam (Long pause) All I am willing to say at this point is that it is hard, Elisa. Been really hard. For a long time.

Elisa I see.

Fanny The test, Elisa. What are the results of the last AIDS test?

Elisa (Pause) Negative. It was negative.

Robert Thank, God.

Adam So all this was for nothing.

Elisa Nothing? I spent that last four days living with a death sentence that you put me under, and you say it's nothing? You gave me Chlamydia, Adam. I didn't give it to myself. It had to come from somewhere. If not this girl, then who? Who?

Adam I can't say.

Elisa Can't say or won't say. (Beat) I want the truth, Adam. I need the truth. I deserve the truth. And you are the only one who has it.

Robert Unburden yourself, brother. Believe me. You will feel better. It will save your life. Maybe your marriage.

Fanny If I can make a suggestion? Something that may help you. The two of you. (Elisa nods) There is a process that was used in South Africa following the end of apartheid. Because of all the years of pain and lies, the people needed the truth. To heal, to move on. It is called "Truth and Reconciliation". Both sides tell their truth – what they did, why they did it. Without judgment or reprisal. The perpetrators and the victims. One side and the other. Just simply tell their truths. But you must be honest. Answer all questions honestly. No matter how hurtful those answers may be. Trust me. It is a healing pain. It may be what's needed here. So think about it. If it can help heal a nation, it may help you both to heal.

(Adam and Elisa digest this)

Robert Adam? (Just looks at Robert) How you doing? (Adam nods)

Fanny We should get going. (To Elisa) Will you be ok?

Elisa I don't know. But Adam and I need to talk. Alone.

Fanny Ok.

Robert Call. If you need us. Either, both, it doesn't matter. We'll drop what we're doing and be there. We'll be there for you.

Fanny Adam. We mean it.

(They exit. Adam and Elisa look at each other a long time. Adam has a look of hurt and defiance, like a child who has been caught and knows he has done wrong. They say nothing. Neither knowing where to start nor wanting to start. Elisa starts tidying the room)

Scene 11

On the larger screen. Africa. The garden is brown, dry. Dead. Juliana lays in the garden her baby beside her. Juliana is dead. The baby whimpers.

Elisa To know the man is to know what he loves. To love the man is to love what he loves. Charles Darwin. Adam's boyhood hero and area of expertise. I wanted to know him, to know Adam. And so I planted a garden. And in the process fell in love. But what is there not to love about Charles Darwin. A scientific genius. A good provider for his family. A patient and caring father. A dedicated, loving husband. Faithful to the end. Believing that we emulate the attributes of those we admire most, those were the seeds I thought were being sown, the life and marriage I thought would grow. Confusing Adam with Darwin, Darwin with Adam, taking one man for the other and seeing neither clearly. I lost all sense of clarity and self. And failed to see this poor, poor open man ... close.

Scene 12

Living room in a dead garden.

Elisa How many?

Adam Does it matter?

Elisa To me.

Adam I don't know. Lots.

Elisa Lots. (Beat) Who?

Adam Look. I can't. I can't do this right now, ok? (Starts to exit)

Elisa Then when, Adam? Tomorrow? Next week? I don't know if we have that much time. (He sits back down)

Adam Ok. Women. Just women I met. At work, on the street. Students. Teachers. A secretary. A nurse. Some married, some single. Young, older. A couple you know. But most you don't know. Just women.

Elisa And you never wore a condom.

Adam Sometimes. Not often. I don't like them.

Elisa How could you? You know how dangerous it is out there. With all the people dying from AIDS in this world. To not wear protection. You're lucky you didn't kill me. Or kill yourself.

Adam I know.

Elisa Did you ever once think about me? About Daddy? What this would do to Daddy.

Adam You want the truth?

Elisa Yes.

Adam No. In those moments, I wasn't thinking about you.

Elisa I don't know what hurts me more Adam. Knowing you fuck around or that you care so little about Doddy and me that you would gamble with our lives.

Adam I care about you. And Doddy. I love Doddy....

Elisa But you don't love me.

Adam Of course I love you. Do you think I would have stayed with you all these years if I didn't love you?

Elisa I don't know what to think, Adam.

Adam All those women, those other women, do you think I loved them? I didn't care about them. Not one. They were they there and they were easy. It was that easy. Do you think I was out there looking for them? No. Most of the time they came on to me. They knew I was married. They didn't care. They weren't looking for love. Or maybe they were. It didn't matter. It was sex they wanted. Sex they offered. Just sex.

Elisa And you were happy to oblige them.

Adam Sure. Why not? Do you know how hard it is for me, for any man, to turn down sex? To get rejected at home and then have to say no when the opportunity pops. Time after time. I thought I was doing you a favor. Taking the pressure off you.

Elisa You were helping me out. That's sweet.

Adam You are always too tired, too busy, too upset with me, too something.

Elisa Now you're saying this is my fault? Don't make this about me, Adam.

Adam I am a man. Men need sex, Elisa. If we don't get it one place, we get it another.

Elisa That much sex. You need that much sex?

Adam Yes, Elisa. Dangerous, interesting, lively engaged sex. Not once a week or every two weeks or whenever you decide you want it and in between nothing. I need sex. Lots of sex. With frequency and regularity. It is my nature. It is the male nature. And if we don't get enough, we wander. It's what we do.

Elisa And you are such a slave to your biology, you are such an animal you can't control yourself. Are you so totally without restraint? What about moral obligation, responsibility, honor, trust, sincerity, commitment. Do those things mean nothing to you? Does it all go out the window the moment some woman shakes her butt at you.

Adam It doesn't make me proud to say it, but it would appear so. I am a man. We're hard wired for sex. It's instinctive. To sow our seeds as widely as possible. I am sorry, if it hurts you, but it's what I am.

Elisa It's funny. Men boast how they can control the wind, hold back the sea, tame animals, split atoms, create life in a fucking test tube. But get an erection and you're suddenly helpless. You can control all of nature, but you can't control your own. It's such bullshit! (Beat) Dare I ask, Adam? Do I have to worry about some woman showing up here one day with some brat that looks like you? Are there any children out there that I should know about?

Adam I don't know. I don't think so. But I don't know.

Elisa Shit.

Adam Look, Elisa. I am a sorry you had to find out. I am sorry how you found out. Not wearing a condom was stupid. I should have but I didn't. I shouldn't fuck around on you but I do. Why? Maybe it's

more complex than biology. Maybe it's a lot of things. A lot of silly little things building up over time. But I really didn't think I was hurting anyone. Just taking care of my needs. I can see now where that thinking was a bit faulty. (Beat) I do love you. And Doddy. I love our family. Our home...

Elisa Not enough though Adam. Not enough. (Long pause)

Adam So what happens now? Where do we go from here?

Elisa I don't know. I honestly don't know. I loved you, Adam. I trusted you. With my heart. With our lives. You, our son, our house, this life was everything I ever wanted. You turned it into shit.

Adam (Weakly) I am sorry.

Elisa I don't think sorry is good enough. (Beat) The objective of sex is to create life, perpetuate life. But I look at you and I see death. My death. The death of my family. Everything I loved. In you I see the death of many, many women. So, I know I can't go upstairs and lay down with you because I can't trust you. I can't trust you to be faithful. I can't trust you to control your nature. I can't trust you to wear a condom. Life, my life is too precious. Kill yourself if you want to, but someone has got to be around to take care of Doddy.

Adam That's fair, I guess.

Elisa I thought I knew you Adam. I thought you were a smart man, a learned man. A man of intelligence and good moral judgment. A man of ideas and principles. A caring husband and father. Just like your idol. But you are a fraud, Adam. You are no Charles Darwin. And you are a lousy Darwinist.

Adam I am sorry, Elisa.

Elisa So am I, Adam.

Adam Listen, Elisa. It stops. It all stops here and now. I know it hard for you to believe right now but know that it will never happen again. I'll change. I know I can change...

Elisa Go to bed, Adam. I can't hear this right now. I can barely look at you. Just go to bed and get out of my sight.

Adam Ok. Ok, I understand. We'll talk in the morning. I'll tell you everything. Anything you want to know. The truth. That is the least I can do. Good night. (Exits)

Elisa Good ...bye.

Scene 13

Elisa in the garden. A dry dead garden. Lupine stalks sticking out every which way, strange ghostly specters of the luscious phallic flowers that once grew. There is a bundle, the baby, from Africa. It is quiet. Just lying. Not crying. Too sick to cry.

Elisa I wonder what he'd think if he were alive today. Right about some things, wrong about others. Would he giggle with the discovery of DNA? The fuel of natural selection. Stranded gene sequences decoded to reveal that plants and birds, bugs and men all share a common ancestry. Everything related, everything connected, beneath the surface, where one gene is all it takes to make a difference. Even bacteria and viruses, all part of the same continuum of life and death. Would he gasp to see evolution through the eyepiece of a microscope? HIV changing faster that we can we cure it. Each contaminated being an isolated island, each with differing conditions and their own struggle to survive. The Galapagos times 40 million. The virus mutating in rapid adaptation, and each infected person carrying his or her own unique variation of the disease. Would he sit smugly in his study, his TV flashing images of this plague, secure in his English

superiority and the knowledge that Nature herself has sought to exterminate the savages herself? Or would he be appalled by the all the sex, sex, sex. Survival of the fittest, taken to pornographic extreme and played out with primal ferocity, daily, on Jerry Springer. I see him shake his head in supreme disgust. His civilized world in sickening decline and Nature weeping acid tears.

Charles Darwin. Forget about Charles Darwin. In the end he's just a man, like any other man. He'll dash your dreams and rob your soul. Dead men don't love. They just leave their words behind. And words are no protection.

If I could only get out of my head and into what is left of my heart.

(She hugs herself and shuts her eyes) Listen, Elisa. Listen, with your heart. It will tell you what to do. (A long pause. Then the soft whimper of the baby) There. (The baby whimpers again) There it is again. Be still and follow the sound. (She walks blindly towards the baby) Doddy? Is that you? (She looks at the baby, then kneels on the ground and picks it up and cradles it in her arms) Somewhere a mother dies. A child wanders lost and lone. A baby roots for dry dead breasts and wastes from want of someone to just care. But I am still here with you, Doddy. So don't cry, baby. Please don't cry. Mama is still here for you. (Elisa lies down with the baby.) Today we are the lucky ones.

(The lights slowly fade on Elisa, lying in the dead garden comforting the dying baby. The music from the beginning of the play comes in, softly at first and the growing in volume. The children singing are all AIDS orphans from the Uganda Orphans Choir.)

The End

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