

INHERITING THE EARTH

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. GARDEN, THE MOUNT (1816) -- DAY

CREDITS START.

A small boy is running through a large and well kept garden, his hands are clasped together holding something protectively. He trips and falls, winding himself because he cannot use his hands to protect himself. As he stands up, the young CHARLES DARWIN (7) carefully opens his hand to reveal a CALOSOMA (large green beetle) crouched there. Satisfied that his discovery is safe, CHARLES runs on, his shirt is now covered with mud, towards the imposing house that stands at the end of the garden path.

INT. HALLWAY, THE MOUNT -- DAY

We move with the YOUNG CHARLES, hands still clasped together, past a servant dusting the hall table, up the stairs, past a MAID carrying FRESH SHEETS along a bedroom corridor and up another smaller staircase until we reach the door to CHARLES'S BEDROOM at the top of the house. Breathless, he uses his elbow to lever the door open.

INT. CHARLES'S BEDROOM, THE MOUNT -- DAY

CHARLES runs in. The room is untidy and stacked with books and boxes, there are jars containing specimens and the remains of various experiments littered all over the place. In front of the window stands a large desk and CHARLES carefully pulls open a drawer.

ROBERT DARWIN (O.S.)

Charles! Charles?

He freezes. The door opens, standing in the doorway is his father ROBERT, (50) a large and imposing man dressed in a dark green coat and waistcoat.

ROBERT DARWIN (CONT'D)

I hope that's your latin revision.

We see CHARLES, slightly hunched to hide his dirty shirt and clutching a LATIN TEXTBOOK.

CHARLES

Mmmmm!

He holds up a LATIN GRAMMAR without looking round. ROBERT looks suspicious, but the scene looks innocent enough.

ROBERT DARWIN

(grumpy)

Well, it's about time. We don't want a repetition of last term do we?

CHARLES deep in the grammar shakes his head but does not reply. ROBERT DARWIN scans the room once more and then goes, closing the door behind him. CHARLES drops the book and opens the drawer and pulls out a GLASS JAR with some leaves in it.

ANGLE ON

CHARLES opening his mouth carefully removing the BEETLE still alive from its hiding place. He places it in the jar and screws on the lid. We hear the sound of SHOUTING and STAMPING.

CREDITS END.

INT. LIBRARY, OXFORD MUSEUM (1860) -- DAY

A large room with galleried bookshelves packed with Oxford Undergraduates shouting and stamping their approval or disapproval. There are more students crowded at the sides of the room and on the galleries and stairways. At the far end of the room two speakers sit at a table, Thomas HUXLEY(42) and Bishop WILBERFORCE (60's) known as 'Soapy Sam' from his habit of rubbing his hands together as he speaks. Between them is, DR DRAPER (50's) the American moderator. WILBERFORCE has the floor.

WILBERFORCE

What is our origin asks Mr Darwin? The answer gentlemen, is simple. God. God, is our origin, Creator of all things, visible and invisible. Which of us here truly believes that an accidental collision of elements could produce an 'Oxford' man?

(Laughter)

A 'Cambridge man' now, that might give us pause for thought, but here in Oxford...

(the crowd roars,
drowning him out)

Mr Darwin cannot produce a shred of evidence, indeed he cannot even produce himself. Instead he sends us his bulldog to bark for him. Remind me Mr Huxley, was it your grandfather or your grandmother who was the ape?

The crowd erupts and WILBERFORCE smiles. We notice a distinguished looking man, with a proud aquiline face, ROBERT FITZROY (56) who remains still. HUXLEY stands to reply.

HUXLEY

My Lord, I would rather to be related to an ape who acquires reason than a man who, having been born with it, chooses

(MORE)

HUXLEY (CONT'D)
to lose it, as your Grace appears to
have done!

The crowd go wild again.

INT. HYDROTHERAPY ROOM (1860) -- DAY

Silence. A large white tiled room with three PLINTHS. Decorated with a selection of LEVERS and NOZZLES for the attachment of various hoses and other devices which form part of the WATER TREATMENTS available in the room. A LONE FIGURE lying on one of these 'plinths', wrapped in white sheets with only a BEARD visible. Two ATTENDANTS dressed in long waterproofed aprons are adjusting the taps.

INT. LIBRARY, OXFORD MUSEUM (1860) -- DAY

A WOMAN who has fainted is being carried out of the room by some over eager undergraduates.

HUXLEY
Mr Darwin would be here if he could to
present his own arguments but his doctors
will not permit it.

WILBERFORCE
I am sure that we are sorry that he is
sick, but...
(he gazes balefully
at the crowd)
it is information that can comes as no
surprise to the readers of his sadly
misguided text.

Booing from some of the students.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE HYDROTHERAPY ROOM (1860) -- DAY

DR GULLY(60) thin but sprightly with a salesman's confidence is walking down the long white corridor with ETTY (18) (Henrietta), DARWIN's eldest daughter, who has long dark hair and her mother's eyes.

GULLY
My treatment is starting to work, his
swellings have begun to subside, but it
will take time. He is not a simple case.

ETTY
Mama says his body is the battleground
of his mind.

GULLY
My dear Miss Darwin, if he could be
persuaded to stop writing my task would
become a great deal easier!

ETTY
I think we both know that would be
impossible, Dr Gully.

GULLY nods.

INT. LIBRARY, OXFORD MUSEUM -- DAY

A WOMAN who has fainted is being carried out of the room by
some over eager undergraduates.

FITZROY stands up, holding in his hands a bible.

FITZROY
Gentlemen.

He is not heard above the noise but DRAPER, the MODERATOR
sees him and tries to calm the crowd.

DRAPER
Order please. Order.

FITZROY looks around.

FITZROY
Mr Huxley speaks of his friend, Mr Darwin,
well, it is with regret that I must inform
you that I considered Charles Darwin my
friend. Once I would have gone so far
as to say my 'dear' friend. And I fear
I am to blame for the illogical,
unchristian and blasphemous fantasy that
we have been subjected to this afternoon.

The crowd start to chant at him: 'Ape, Ape, Ape', but FITZROY
plows on.

FITZROY (CONT'D)
Man is God's creature, made in his own
image.
(holding up the bible)
We are bound by God's holy charge to
bear witness to his word. In the
beginning was the word and the word was
God!

His words are drowned out and he gives up and struggles
through the group towards the door.

INT. HYDROTHERAPY ROOM -- DAY

Close on the shower heads above the plinths, as they start
to spray out a fine drizzle of cool spray. From another
angle we see the misty water falling round the wrapped body.
Dr GULLY and ETTY observe the effect.

EXT. OXFORD MUSEUM -- DAY

FITZROY comes down the steps of the museum, a middle aged journalist follows him.

JOURNALIST

Excuse me.
(running after him)
Excuse me, sir?

FITZROY stops and looks at him.

JOURNALIST (CONT'D)

I just wanted to take a name, if I may?

FITZROY

Fitzroy. Robert Fitzroy.

The JOURNALIST is writing as FITZROY turns to go.

JOURNALIST

(realizing)
Vice Admiral Fitzroy?

FITZROY nods.

JOURNALIST (CONT'D)

And how exactly are you to blame, sir?

FITZROY

(beat)
Because I was foolish enough to lose a button, sir. But that was a long time ago, on the other side of the world.

The JOURNALIST takes the note and then looks up.

EXT. WULAIA, TIERRA DEL FUEGO -- DAY

Pale early morning light, a deserted beach with snow clad hills beyond.

CAP: THIRTY YEARS EARLIER

EXT. HILL ABOVE WULAIA -- DAY

CLOSE on a young FUEGIAN HUNTER, he has white paint smeared in finger streaks across his face and his eyes are alert and watchful, his name is ORUNDELLICO (15) but we will come to know him by his 'English' name JEMMYS BUTTON. He carries a small bow, an arrow fitted, as he approaches his prey, a FLOCK OF BIRDS. Behind him an OLDER FUEGIAN is watching his progress. JEMMYS moves carefully forward and then fires, in quick succession, three ARROWS. The FLOCK takes to the air, leaving two dead. We hear the sound of BANGING and WHISTLING like a native chant.

EXT. WOODLAND -- DAY

The BEATING has a rhythm and the WHISTLING and CALLING increases we have no reason to believe we are in a new location until the BEATERS come into view striding purposefully through the English woodland, banging sticks against the trees and calling out. In front of them the GROUSE rise up.

EXT. WOODLAND, MARE -- DAY

A line of 'Guns' stand waiting. They are spaced thirty feet apart and behind each one is a LOADER. Among them we notice JOSIAH WEDGEWOOD (58) tall with a clear forceful manner, his 'loader' stands just behind him.

LOADER

Here they come, sir.

As the 'line of 'guns' take aim we notice JOSIAH'S sons, JOSH (33), Henry (29), FRANK (28) and HENSLEIGH (24) each with their 'loader' and standing slightly apart a young MAN, aged 18, untidy hair and piecing eyes, standing alert. Behind him, not one but two 'loaders', this is the CHARLES DARWIN, JOSIAH'S nephew. Suddenly the GROUSE fly up and the firing starts. CHARLES seems to be firing three times as fast as anyone else, blasting both barrels then taking the next loaded gun and blasting again. BIRDS fall dead around him and the dogs start the business of retrieval.

EXT. FIELDS, MARE -- DAY

TWO GIRLS are running across the fields, in front is 22 year old FANNY WEDGEWOOD, a tall and commanding girl with brown hair and behind her is her younger sister EMMA WEDGEWOOD(19) slighter and darker with wide eyes. They see the 'guns' over the hill towards among them CHARLES and JOSIAH. CHARLES is carrying TWO SHOTGUNS and is at ease in the cheerful family group which include JOSIAH'S The girls run to greet them.

FANNY

How many?

CHARLES

Seventy eight brace!

EMMA

A hundred and fifty six! You beat your record!

CHARLES

(modestly)

I was lucky and of course these brothers of yours are terrible shots!

The brother's laugh at this.

JOSH
Charlie had twice as many guns as anybody else. You should cut your score in half.

CHARLES
(protesting)
It was perfectly fair. There's no rule about how many guns.

JOSH
It's a sport not a fairground competition.

CHARLES
Then why are you complaining?

EMMA
(shyly)
Can I carry one of your guns?

CHARLES
(careless)
If your careful. Just rest it on you're arm.

EMMA
I know how.

FANNY takes CHARLES'S arm possessively.

FANNY
Don't listen to my beastly brothers, they're just jealous.

The brothers jeer as the watch CHARLES and FANNY. EMMA watches as FANNY walks ahead. JOSIAH comes up beside her.

JOSIAH
Shall I take that?

EMMA
(firmly)
No thank you. I can manage.

EXT. WOOD, TIERRA DEL FUEGO -- NIGHT

One of the birds is being roasted over a small fire. JEMMYS is alone, he looks around nervously as he hears the night sounds of the forest. Unaware that he is still being watched by the OLDER MAN he prods at his 'supper' to see if it's cooked.

The OLDER MAN carefully puts on a mask, it is tall, pointed and chalky white which matches his painted body. His benign presence suddenly becomes more frightening. He stands up.

JEMMYS lifts his 'supper' from the fire.

INT. DINING ROOM, MARE -- NIGHT

CLOSE on a plate of GROUSE carried to ROBERT DARWIN who is sitting at the head of the family table which is filled with the combined DARWIN and WEDGEWOOD families, ROBERT is sitting at the opposite end and between them are their wives and children. It is the young people who dominate and there is a relaxed and informal atmosphere.

JOSIAH

We shall be living off grouse for a month thanks to the herculean labors of your son, Robert!

ROBERT DARWIN

If he worked as hard at his studies as he does in the field he would be a doctor tomorrow.

JOSH

I'm not sure I would want to be treated by someone whose main interest was how many patients a day he could cure.

EMMA

I think Charles will make a brilliant doctor.

CAROLINE

(teasing)

Ah, but will he find a nurse that can keep up with him? What do you think Fanny?

FANNY

(blushing)

I agree with Emma thank you.

CHARLES

Keep your unpleasant thoughts to yourself, sister. I'm working very hard!

CAROLINE

(laughing)

Yes we can see that!

CHARLES looks across to FANNY, EMMA watches. We hear a sharp crack as a twig is broken.

EXT. WOODS, TIERRA DEL FUEGO -- NIGHT

JEMMYS looks up, standing beyond the firelight he sees in the shadows the WHITE MASKED FIGURE. He looks frightened.

JEMMYS

Yetaita.

This is the name of the 'spirit' although the word will sound more like a grunt to us. JEMMYS stands and the MASKED FIGURE advances. JEMMYS retreats and the FIGURE advances until he is standing over the fire. He raises his arms and JEMMYS finally turns and runs. The MASKED FIGURE gives chase.

Fast intercuts: JEMMYS running wildly through the woods. The MASKED FIGURE chasing

JEMMYS stumbles and falls, terrified he rolls himself into a ball. We hear a piercing scream.

INT. LECTURE THEATRE, EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY -- DAY

A group of about TWENTY STUDENTS are crowded round an operating table. The SURGEON, a middle aged Scotsman dressed in a frock coat, with three assistants wearing bloody aprons who are involved in restraining a PATIENT who we do not at first see because of the crowd. Among the faces we recognize CHARLES, several students are holding handkerchiefs to their faces. Throughout the speech the PATIENT, girl of about ten, screams continually so that the SURGEON has to shout to be heard.

SURGEON

The cut must be made swiftly and cleanly. It is important not to be distracted by the patient which only serves to prolong the agony.

(to assistant)

Saw, Mr Andrews. Hold her still man or I'll be removing your arm instead.

As the SURGEON starts to saw the bone the screaming abruptly stops. A student in the front row wipes some blood from his face.

SURGEON (CONT'D)

There. Now she is unconscious and we can proceed more easily.

As the students move forward CHARLES move backwards.

SURGEON (CONT'D)

(sawing)

At least she will find childbirth a little less frightening.

He is feeling faint and stumbles towards the door pushing his way past the other students. The SURGEON looks up.

SURGEON (CONT'D)

(loud)

Darwin. Mr Darwin come back here. Mr Darwin if you expect to qualify as a Surgeon come back here immediately.

CHARLES pays no attention and pushes out through a doorway.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE OPERATING THEATRE -- DAY

CHARLES leaning against the wall breathing hard. He doubles up as though in pain himself. There is a groan from inside.

EXT. TIERRA DEL FUEGO -- DAY

Snowy mountains in the distance, we move down to see a grouping of crude dwellings made of curved branches with GUANACO SKINS draped over them. A selection of small fires are burning by each wigwam. The smoke drifts through the clearing. We find JEMMYS sitting at one of these fires with the OLD MAN (CAPS indicate subtitles for Yamanan dialogue).

PADRINOS

GOOD. YOU HAVE DONE WELL. SOON YOU WILL BE READY FOR THE CHIEXSAUS CEREMONY AND YOU WILL BE ABLE TO HUNT AS A MAN. NO LONGER AS A BOY.

JEMMYS

I WAS FRIGHTENED, WHEN I WAS ALONE.

The OLD MAN nods and smiles.

PADRINOS

BY THE SPIRIT OF YETAITA?

JEMMYS

YES.

PADRINOS

IT IS GOOD TO BE FRIGHTENED OF THE SPIRIT. TO REMEMBER THAT THE SPRIT WATCHES US. BUT IT IS ALSO GOOD TO UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF FEAR.

He pulls out the WHITE MASK and shows it to JEMMYS.

PADRINOS (CONT'D)

THE SPRIT LIVES IN THE WOODS BUT THIS IS WHAT YOU SAW. I WAS WITH YOU EVERY MOMENT. WE NEED TO CONQUER OUR FEAR OR FEAR WILL DEFEAT US.

There is a disturbance as we hear shouting and running and a number of FUEGIANS run past.

EXT. BEAGLE CHANNEL, NR WULAIA (1829) -- DAY

The sea is calm as a small three masted ship makes its way down the narrow channel. The BEAGLE is a 10-gun brig and standing on the main deck is its newly appointed Captain, ROBERT FITZROY (24) and with him LIEUT WICKHAM(18).

WICKHAM

Look at them. Staring at us, as though we were the curiosity!

From their POV we see groups of FUEGIANS standing on the hilltops with fires burning. Watching the ship.

FITZROY

Tell the helmsman to take us in. Tell Mr Bos'ick I want sounding every hundred feet.

WICKHAM

Yes, Sir.

FITZROY stares out towards the island.

EXT. BEACH WULAIA -- DAY

A group of FUEGIANS, carrying torches, running through the trees down towards the beach, among them JEMMYS. They start to climb into their canoes laying the torches down in the front of the boats.

EXT. WULAIA, TIERRA DEL FUEGO -- DAY

The CANOES make their way towards the ship, a small plume of smoke rises out of each one as the FUEGIANS carry their fire with them. It is the women who do the ROWING.

EXT. COMPANIONWAY, BEAGLE -- DAY

A stairway has been rigged at the side of the ship and FITZROY and SULLIVAN and other members of the crew stand on the steps and the small platform at the bottom, they are bartering with the FUEGIANS who offer OTTER SKINS and FRESH FISH. SULLIVAN is 'paying' with strips of bright red cloth which are eagerly accepted. We see JEMMYS staring, looking in awe at the ship which seems to tower above him. FITZROY sees this and beckons to him. JEMMYS looks at him and smiles. FITZROY beckons again holding out his hand and JEMMYS starts to clamber towards him. His MOTHER who is in the boat with him calls out but JEMMYS ignores her. FITZROY takes his hand and pulls him onto the ladder.

FITZROY

Don't be afraid.

His MOTHER stands up in the boat calling after him. FITZROY tears a BUTTON of his coat and throws it to her and she catches it.

ROBERT DARWIN (O.S.)
And what the bloody hell do you think
you are fit for, I'd like to know?

INT. ROBERT'S STUDY, THE MOUNT -- DAY

CHARLES is standing in front of his father's desk, he looks pale and anxious. ROBERT DARWIN is consulting a series of large medical textbooks as he talks, making notes and getting up to select another volume.

ROBERT DARWIN
Fear of blood is nothing, it will pass,
a little squeamishness. Everybody has
it to begin with, I was no different
myself at my first operation.

CHARLES
It wasn't the blood, it was the pain I
could not bear.

ROBERT DARWIN
I thought you wanted to be a doctor!
That's why I took you away from school
early in the first place, although God
knows they were keen enough to see the
back of you.
(exasperated)
You can't make a living out of bug
collecting you know!

CHARLES looks as though he is about to faint.

ROBERT DARWIN (CONT'D)
What's the matter with you?

CHARLES
I don't know. Do you mind if I sit down.

He sits anyway and sits slumped in the chair. Robert gets up and comes over. He takes a professional look, examining his eyes and taking his pulse.

ROBERT DARWIN
Well, the army won't take you that's for
sure, so there's only one alternative.

CHARLES
I though I might...

ROBERT DARWIN
(ignoring this)
The Church. We'll find you a quiet parish
somewhere but you'll need a degree and
that means back to Latin!

CHARLES bows his head.

EXT. SEAS -- NIGHT

The BEAGLE in full sail making its way back to England.

INT. FOR'ARD SICKBAY -- NIGHT

JEMMYS sits on the floor staring, opposite him we see two other FUEGIANS, FUEGIA BASKET(14) a cheerful looking girl with a pretty face and YORK MINSTER(22), taller and thinner with long black hair. Although they look to be of the same race as JEMMYS in fact they are of a different tribe (Oonan) and speak a different language.

JEMMYS
HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN ON THIS GREAT
CANOE?

FUEGIA, not understanding, looks at YORK confused.

FUEGIA
WHAT IS HE SAYING? I CANNOT UNDERSTAND
HIM.

YORK
YO'CUSHLA DO NOT LISTEN TO HIM. HE IS
YAGHAN. THEY EAT WOMEN'S FLESH.

FUEGIA'S eyes widen in surprise.

YORK (CONT'D)
HE LOOKS AT YOU BECAUSE HE IS HUNGRY.

JEMMYS
(trying again)
IF YOU SPEAK SLOWER I MAY UNDERSTAND.

YORK spits at him. JEMMYS looks across at FUEGIA who is still terrified.

INT. CHARLES'S BEDROOM, THE MOUNT -- NIGHT

CHARLES is lying in his bed. He is still pale and shivering slightly. CAROLINE comes in with a cup of broth.

CAROLINE
How are you feeling?

CHARLES
A little better.

She sits on the bed and hands him the broth.

CAROLINE
Cook made this for you.

CHARLES
Thank you.

CAROLINE
You shouldn't let father bully you.

CHARLES
He's right. I've got to do something.

CAROLINE
But the church! I can't quite see you
as a country vicar somehow.

CHARLES grins weakly.

INT. GUNROOM -- NIGHT

The GUNROOM serves as the officers' mess and LIEUTENANTS
SULIVAN and WICKHAM are finishing their evening meal with
ASS SURGEON BEN BYNOE and three others as FITZROY enters.
The men start to get up.

FITZROY
At ease gentlemen. Have you managed to
persuade our 'guests' to eat?

BYNOE
The boy ate bread heartily and even tried
some cheese, the girl tried the bread
but didn't like it. The tall one refused
everything.

WICKHAM
Very primitive language skills, I'd say.
I don't think you'll have much luck
teaching them English.

FITZROY
Let's not give up before we've even begun,
Lieutenant.

SULIVAN
Begun what sir? What do you want to do
with them?

FITZROY
Educate them. What more precious gift
can one man give another?

He smiles.