

'MR. TURNER'

An Original Screenplay

by

Mike Leigh

Sunset. A windmill by a stream.

TWO WOMEN pass by, chattering cheerfully in Dutch.

A MAN stands on the horizon. He is sketching.

This is J.M.W. TURNER.

...

TITLES

...

A busy London street in the mid-1820's. TURNER goes on his way, carrying his bags.

Arriving at his house, Turner lets himself in with his key.

In the hall, he hangs up his hat.

TURNER

Oi!

He encounters a young woman, HANNAH.

Aye, aye, me damsel.

HANNAH

Welcome home, Mr. Billy. We've been worried to death about you.

TURNER

For why?

HANNAH

On account of that explosion.

TURNER

What was that?

HANNAH

At Ostend.

TURNER

Oh, yes. I heard tell of that at Antwerp. Dreadful. Dirty linen.

He gives her one of his bags.

HANNAH

Mr. William's been getting in a stew about it.

TURNER

Is he out and about his business?

HANNAH

That he is.

Turner enters his dark studio. He starts to open the shutters. Light streams into the room. Hannah brings him a small glass of sherry, which he drinks. She helps him to open the shutters and to move a work table.

TURNER

You faring well?

HANNAH

Thank you. How was your journey home?

TURNER

It was execrable.

HANNAH

Oh. Mm. You in need of anything else?

TURNER

Tea.

He has sat down. She hovers by him.

He feels her breast. Then he briefly lays his hand on her crutch. She scuttles out.

...

WILLIAM TURNER SNR comes round the corner of a busy street, carrying a large shopping basket. He enters a shop. Shelves of art supplies, notably large jars of brightly coloured pigments. The COLOURMAN stands behind the counter.

TURNER SNR

Good morning, Signor Grande.

COLOURMAN
Mr. Turner. Buongiorno.

TURNER SNR
Joshua.

JOSHUA
(an assistant)
Morning, Sir.

COLOURMAN
We have the damn rats.

TURNER SNR
No shortage of them in this city.

COLOURMAN
(says something in Italian. Then -)
What can I do for you today?

TURNER SNR
Let me see.

COLOURMAN
He is back?

TURNER SNR
We are expecting him any day now.

COLOURMAN
What do we need?

TURNER SNR
An ounce of chrome yellow.

COLOURMAN
Chrome yellow, Joshua.

JOSHUA
Chrome yellow, sir.

Joshua attends to this.

TURNER SNR
A large packet of flake white.

COLOURMAN
Flake white.

TURNER SNR
What is your price for a bladder of
ultramarine?

COLOURMAN
My price is the best price.

He weighs out the powdered paint.

TURNER SNR
And what might that price be?

COLOURMAN
Blue ultramarine is coming from
far, far away. Afghanistan. What
else do you need?

TURNER SNR
Bottle of poppy oil, some Indian
red.

COLOURMAN
Poppy oil, Joshua.

JOSHUA
Yes, sir.

...

A bustling market. TURNER SNR passes by the stalls,
inspecting the wares as he goes.

He enters a butcher's shop. The butcher selects a pig's head
for him.

...

Turner's house. In the kitchen. Hannah pounds some
ingredients with a mortar. Turner Snr puts down his basket.
The pig's head is visible.

TURNER SNR
There's your prize porker.

HANNAH
Is he handsome?

TURNER SNR
He has a big smile on his face.
You making the sauce?

HANNAH
It's all but done, save the brains.

TURNER SNR
Good. Dearie me.

HANNAH
Will you take a dish of tea, Mr.
William?

TURNER SNR
Thank ye, Hannah.

He makes as if to sit, then doesn't.

HANNAH
Shall you be putting those chattels
away? I should.

TURNER SNR
Best do it now. Then I can rest me
weary legs.

He leaves the kitchen, and goes up some stairs. Hannah follows him at a short distance. She hovers in a doorway, listening to the old man and his son.

...

In Turner's studio.

TURNER SNR
You're home, Billy boy!

TURNER
Hey, Daddy!

They hug each other.

TURNER SNR
I thought you was exploded. I've
been down on my knees and praying
you was safe.

TURNER
Well, you've been chafing your old
pedestals for naught, Daddy. I was
a hundred miles distant.

TURNER SNR
You heard tell of it, then?

TURNER

I did indeed.

TURNER SNR

Terrible. They poor souls has
perished, two score or more.

TURNER

Yes, took a few brave soldiers with
it an' all. I was vexed to learn
you've been entertaining concerns,
old Dadda.

TURNER SNR

'Twas only natural.

TURNER

Daddy.

They kiss each other. Then they move to the work table,
where Turner is preparing some watercolours.

TURNER SNR

How was your crossing?

TURNER

Set fair on departure, lumpy in the
middle.

TURNER SNR

Did you sail from Rotterdam?

TURNER

No, Dieppe. Night coach from
Brighton proved to be an heinous
travail.

TURNER SNR

How so?

TURNER

It was stuffed full of yacking and
cackling females. Pox-ridden
harridan as broad in the beam as
the old Victory at Trafalgar.

TURNER SNR

Were your travels productive?

TURNER

Exceeding refreshing, old Daddy.
Amsterdam: had a gander at the
Rembrandt; Militia Company, Antwerp
Cathedral; Rubens, the triptych;
(MORE)

TURNER (CONT'D)
 Flanders: still as flat as a
 witch's tit.

Hannah brings Turner Snr a cup of tea.

TURNER SNR
 Thank you, Hannah. You sly girl.
 Did you find tolerable diggings?

TURNER
 Stinking fleapit at Dieppe, then
 moved to the harbour. Westerly
 aspect, fine sunset. Oh, Daddy,
 I'm in need of an eight by six.

TURNER SNR
 I have a seven by five and a half
 ready sized and primed.

TURNER
 That should suit.

TURNER SNR
 Right you be.

Turner Snr sits down at a desk.

TURNER
 More's to the point, how have you
 been faring?

TURNER SNR
 In good health, thank the Lord.

TURNER
 Bronchials still rattling?

TURNER SNR
 No.

HANNAH
 He was wheezing last week.

TURNER SNR
 Shh!

TURNER
 October ain't quite come round the
 corner yet, has it?

TURNER SNR
 I've been over to Grande's.
 Ultramarine's gone up to a guinea a
 bladder.

TURNER

Gawd's truth! That brigand still
robbing us, is he?

TURNER SNR

You're in need of a shave.

TURNER

Well, be that as it may, Daddy.
Presently I'm gonna throw myself
into the arms of Morpheus.

Turner leaves the room and goes upstairs. Hannah hovers for a moment, then leaves. The old man attends to some paperwork.

...

Turner's house. Turner Snr bears a very large canvas through the hall, and into the studio.

...

In the kitchen, Hannah watches as Turner Snr shaves the pig's head.

...

Turner Snr carries a jug of hot water up the stairs and enters Turner's bedroom.

Turner is asleep on his bed, fully clothed. His father pinches his toe. He wakes up. Church bells chime in the distance.

...

A little later, Turner Snr is shaving his son.

TURNER SNR

I took a trip down west, Exeter,
last week.

TURNER
How fares the old uncle?

TURNER SNR
Bearing up, considering.

TURNER
Considering what?

TURNER SNR
Well, his age, living alone.
Here's the thing. He wants to
arrange a family gathering.

They both roar with laughter.

...

Father and son are eating at the kitchen table. Hannah sits nearby, watching them. The cooked pig's head sits on a large plate.

TURNER SNR
Will you take some more cheek?

TURNER
Cast us another morsel.

Turner Snr serves his a slice of pork. Hannah gives him some vegetables.

HANNAH
Missing your button, Mr. Billy.

Turner inspects his coat. Hannah scratches the back of her neck, which is a little inflamed.

...

A darkened room in Turner's house, hardly lit - only a couple of candles. Turner Snr shows three middle-aged people into the room, and ELEGANT LADY and GENTLEMAN, and a long-haired, bespectacled ARTISTIC-LOOKING MAN.

TURNER SNR
Be so kind as to enter the
vestibule. The darkness is to a
purpose. I shall return, by and
by.

He goes out, closing the door behind him. The gentleman whispers something to the lady. Long pause. Then Turner Snr returns. He moves round them.

TURNER SNR
Madam. Gentlemen.

He stops by some double doors, which are closed.

TURNER SNR
Behold!

Turner's brightly-lit art gallery is revealed.

TURNER SNR
Three steps down. Pray view at
your leisure.

The trio step down into the gallery and begin to peruse the paintings. Turner Snr hovers near the door.

...

Turner is in his studio, painting at an easel. He stops, and goes to the wall; he opens a very small door, about the size of a small book, and looks through a tiny peep-hole into the gallery. Turner Snr smiles slyly at him as the potential customers inspect the goods.

...

A little later, Turner is still painting in his studio.

His father is relaxing in the drawing room, reading his newspaper and smoking his pipe. There is a loud knock on the front door. He looks up.

On her way to the front door, Hannah closes the door of Turner's studio.

...

In the drawing room Turner Snr listens to the following, which we only hear. So does Turner in his studio. He is not pleased.

SARAH DANBY
Good day to you, Hannah.

HANNAH
Good day to you, Aunt Sarah.

SARAH DANBY
And how are you faring?

HANNAH
Very well, thank you. Are you coming in?

SARAH DANBY
I most certainly am. Is he at home?

HANNAH
He is. I'll tell him you're here.

SARAH DANBY
I can inform him myself, thank you kindly.

SARAH DANBY now bursts aggressively into Turner's studio, accompanied by her two adult DAUGHTERS, one of whom holds a newborn baby.

SARAH DANBY
Good day to you, sir.

TURNER
And a very good day to you, Mrs D.

He continues to paint.

SARAH DANBY
And how do we find you on this fair morning?

TURNER
Exceedingly preoccupied, madam.

SARAH DANBY
'Twas ever thus. You've always been preoccupied. You're too preoccupied for your own good, sir.

TURNER
Nothing comes from nothing, madam.

SARAH DANBY

And we have had nothing from you, sir. Evelina, Georgiana, come and greet your father.

EVELINA

Good day, Father. May I present my child to you?

SARAH DANBY

Your granddaughter.

EVELINA

Rosalie Adelaide.

SARAH DANBY

Your only surviving grandchild. Georgiana, cease your dithering!

The younger daughter, who has hovered by the door, comes forward tentatively.

TURNER

May I suggest, Mrs. D, with the utmost respect, that you withdraw to the drawing room?

Turner Snr enters.

TURNER SNR

Good day to you, Mrs Danby. Would you care to step this way?

SARAH DANBY

Good day to you, Mister Turner.

(To Turner)

And will you be gracing us with your presence in the withdrawing room, sir?

TURNER

Hmm.

SARAH DANBY

I sincerely hope you will. And, pray, do not keep us waiting. We have our own lives to lead. Come along, daughters.

EVELINA

The vapours in this room are most noxious to a child's lungs.

The women all sweep out. Turner Snr exchanges an understanding glance with his son, then leaves, closing the door behind him. As he does so, Turner angrily kicks a stool across the studio.

...

In the drawing room. Evelina has sat down, holding the baby. Sarah and Georgiana stand by the sofa. Hannah hovers. Turner Snr enters.

TURNER SNR

Ladies, pray, sit yourselves.
Sarah, if you please.

SARAH DANBY

I shall be seated, William, when it suits me, and not before.

TURNER SNR

So be it. She's a pretty little thing.

EVELINA

Thank you, Grandfather. We are most proud of her.

SARAH DANBY

We are indeed.

HANNAH

Have you been out strolling, Aunt Sarah?

SARAH DANBY

No, neice. I've been to collect my pension at Leicester Fields, it being the first of the month.

She sits.

HANNAH

Indeed.

Enter Turner.

TURNER

Your latest infant?

EVELINA

To be sure, Father.

TURNER
Of robust constitution?

EVELINA
She has an excellent character.

TURNER
One must trust in Providence.
Colour of eye?

EVELINA
Blue, as yourself.

TURNER
Splendid.

SARAH DANBY
Do not forget your other daughter,
sir, whom you have deigned to
neglect these past two years. Sit
down, Georgiana.

Georgiana does so.

EVELINA
She is learning French.

SARAH DANBY
And music. She is having an
education. Reading, writing,
arithmetic and geography with the
globe.

EVELINA
Sit up straight, Georgie. Dit
quelque chose en français.

TURNER
Bonjour.

GEORGIANA
Bonjour, Papa.

SARAH DANBY
Are you keeping well?

TURNER
I am.

SARAH DANBY
I was not addressing you, sir.

TURNER SNR

I enjoy good health, thank'ee. And yourself.

SARAH DANBY

We are surviving as best we can under the circumstances.

TURNER SNR

And what circumstances might they be?

SARAH DANBY

Straightened circumstances, sir. But we manage to keep body and soul together, no thanks to your ungrateful son.

Turner walks out of the room. Sarah gets up, and shouts after him.

SARAH DANBY

How dare you take your leave of me, Billy Turner! You insult me, as you have always insulted me! Billy!

...

A street. Turner gets into a two-horse coach. A coachman holds the door open for him, then closes it, and clammers up onto the back of the coach. There are two coachmen at the front. One of them is driving. The coach leaves.

...

Now the coach wends its way through the beautiful English countryside.

It arrives at a stately home.

...

Later. Sunset. Across an expansive meadow towards the house comes an elderly gentleman with his dogs. This is LORD EGREMONT, and the house is Petworth. Turner watches him from the steps. Lord Egremont arrives, the dogs disperse, and the two men walk through a couple of rooms. A piano is being played somewhere nearby.

LORD EGREMONT
Good evening, William.

TURNER
Felicitations of the evening to you, Your Lordship. You faring well?

LORD EGREMONT
Bit breathless. Been up to the farm. Watch the sunset. Say goodnight to the milkmaids.

TURNER
Any further consideration as to mechanicalising the thresher?

LORD EGREMONT
You can't beat the old oxen.

TURNER
Is that so, Your Lordship?

LORD EGREMONT
Indeed. We had a ploughing competition last spring between teams of horses and teams of oxen.

TURNER
And the victor?

LORD EGREMONT
The horses.

TURNER
Well, the ox is a sluggish beast.

LORD EGREMONT
Yes, but strong.

TURNER
With the added benefit, when it comes to the end of its natural working life, it makes a very succulent dish.

LORD EGREMONT
Unlike the horse.

TURNER
Good for glue.

A STOUT, AFFECTED FELLOW has been hovering in the background.
He now approaches them.

MANNERS
Your Lordship. A very good evening
to you, sir.

LORD EGREMONT
Good evening, Manners.

MANNERS
Mr. Turner. Are we not blessed by
the heavens to witness so glorious
a crepuscular time of day.....?

He leaves them.

LORD EGREMONT
Imbecile.

Turner and Lord Egremont now inspect a pair of Turner's
landscapes that have clearly been painted specially for the
permanent positions they occupy in the room.

TURNER
Continuing satisfaction as to the
arrangement, Your Lordship?

LORD EGREMONT
I think we have successfully
achieved the correct effect,
William.

TURNER
Thank you.

They move on, passing a wigged footman who is seeing to the
candelabra on the mantelpiece.

LORD EGREMONT
Good evening, Nat.

FOOTMAN
Good evening, My Lord.

They now pass A LADY playing the piano.

LORD EGREMONT
Good evening, Miss Coggins.

MISS COGGINS
Your Lordship. Mr. Turner.

Turner and Lord Egremont arrive at two more of Turner's paintings set in the wall.

LORD EGREMONT
How's your Father faring, William?

TURNER
Bearing up, Your Lordship. Very gracious of you to inquire. We thought we'd lost him this last winter, a very harsh one. He came through. He's a hardy old cove.

LORD EGREMONT
Excellent. See you at dinner.

TURNER
Indeed.

After a momentary pause, Turner joins Miss Coggins, standing near the piano until she finishes playing.

TURNER
Exceedingly beautiful.

MISS COGGINS
You are too kind.

TURNER
I'm familiar with the melody, but...

MISS COGGINS
Herr Beethoven. The Pathétique.

TURNER
I possess a rare fondness for Henry Purcell.

MISS COGGINS
As do I. Yes.

She plays a fragment of a tune.

TURNER
'Dido's Lament.'
(Sings)
(MORE)

TURNER (CONT'D)

*May my wrongs create, create no
sorrow ...*

MISS COGGINS

"Trouble"

TURNER

*Trou ... no trouble in thy breast
... thy breast;*

MISS COGGINS

"Thy breast."

TURNER

*In thy breast. Remember me,
remember me, but*

MISS COGGINS

"Ah! Forget my fate"

TURNER

*Forget my fate. Remember me, but
ah! Forget my fate ... my fate.*

(Pause)

A song of lost love.

MISS COGGINS

Indeed.

TURNER

I thank you.

MISS COGGINS

Thank you, Mr. Turner.

TURNER

Madam.

He leaves, discretely. Miss Coggins is overcome with emotion.

...

Elsewhere in the house, two slightly hysterical YOUNG LADIES rush up a staircase, stopping at the top by a doorway. They giggle at something going on in the room, which they then enter. Watched by a stout, MIDDLE-AGED LADY sitting near him, Turner is painting at an easel. The young women join them.

LADY STUCKLEY

Mr. Turner: I have often pondered:
might there be a distinction
between the way you paint a sunrise
as opposed to a sunset?

TURNER

There is indeed, Lady Stuckley.
'Cause one is going up, whilst the
other is going ...

FIRST YOUNG LADY

... the other is going down.

SECOND YOUNG LADY

Eliza, do hush.

LADY STUCKLEY

And might it also be determined by
the angle of the light?

TURNER

Well, it's weather, vapour, wind,
frangibility and such like.

SECOND YOUNG LADY

Eliza, look at his nails.

FIRST YOUNG LADY

Shh.

TURNER

Whilst you Goddesses are
languishing in the Kingdom of
Hypnos, I am up before the lark to
witness Helios popping his head
above the parapet, with the only
benefit that the sunrise is not
afflicted... with diminishing
light.

He spits on the canvas. One of the young ladies laughs,
whilst the other turns away in disgust.

...

Still at Petworth. Turner leads a bespectacled man into a
room, where a third man is looking at a painting. The men
are HAYDON, a painter, and CAREW, a sculptor. Carew speaks
with an Irish accent. The painting is "Saint Sebastian
comforted by an Angel" by Gerard Seghers. Turner slaps Carew
on the back.

TURNER

Carew.

CAREW

Turner. I'm by way of observing
poor Saint Sebastian here.

HAYDON

The artist is not known to me.

TURNER

Flemish. Uncommonly capacious rump
on the cherub.

HAYDON

It might have gained in potency
with an increase of arrows.

TURNER

Well, yon celestial fellow's
tugging them all out.

HAYDON

I can hardly bear to look upon it.

CAREW

The pain on his face. The mark of
resignation in it.

HAYDON

'Tis a willing sacrifice, is it
not?

TURNER

'Twas not how the poor soul
perished. He was brought back to
full health by a good Samaritan.
Then the heathens cudgelled him to
death and deposited him in a sewer.

HAYDON

I would question the veracity of
that telling.

TURNER

No good deed goes unpunished.

At this, Carew promptly leaves.

HAYDON

What a curious fate is mine. Last
month in the King's Bench Prison in
the company of debtors.

(MORE)

HAYDON (CONT'D)

This month a guest of quality, rank and fashion.

TURNER

Rejoice, Haydon. You find yourself in a veritable bacchanalia. His Lordship keeps a very fine wine cellar. Be sanguine. Fill your boots!

HAYDON

Might I ask you to loan me some money, Turner?

TURNER

I beg your pardon?

HAYDON

I'm in dire and pressing need of one hundred pounds.

TURNER

Out of the question.

HAYDON

My landlord, he's a good man, a patient man, but he will not wait forever. I need to pay the wine merchant, my colourman ...

TURNER

And your dear wife, Mrs. Haydon, she faring well?

HAYDON

Mrs. Haydon is presently with child.

TURNER

Well, you have my hearty congratulations, Haydon.

HAYDON

Congratulations are not in order. I'm in torment.

TURNER

I'm not unsympathetic to your impecunity, Haydon. Therefore I can advance you fifty pounds.

HAYDON

Turner, if one hundred pounds will not spare me from this predicament, what in Jesu's name can fifty pounds do?

TURNER

Then you are refusing to accept the fifty pounds?

HAYDON

It is damned inadequate.

TURNER

I wish you good day, sir.

Turner leaves. Haydon hesitates for a moment, then follows him to the doorway to the expansive meadow.

HAYDON

Turner. My word is my bond. I may not yet be an Academician, but I am a gentleman. I have a painting presently with the King at Windsor. I'm assured he will buy it from me for five hundred guineas or more. Furthermore, I have another fine painting in mind, a companion piece, which he is most certain to purchase in addition.

TURNER

Who has made these assurances?

HAYDON

The King's private secretary, Knighton.

Turner grunts.

TURNER

I can furnish you with five pounds this morning.

HAYDON

Five pounds? Fifty pounds is not sufficient. Five pounds is tantamount to an insult.

TURNER

Sir, I beseech you, brook your ire. If you attend my residence at London, I will loan you fifty pounds.

HAYDON

In addition to the five?

TURNER

Mr. Haydon, you are exceedingly tiresome.

HAYDON

I am gratified. I humbly accept the fifty pounds. Might I find you at the same address? I may swim.

Haydon strides off purposefully. JONES, LESLIE and BEECHEY join Turner; they all watch Haydon recede into the distance.

JONES

'And the spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.'

LESLIE

A tormented soul, for sure. I sympathise, but he attributes all of his failures to anything other than his own behaviour.

BEECHEY

Indeed.

LESLIE

His complaint with life is as absurd as that of a spoke in a wheel railing against the motion that it must of necessity partake.

TURNER

I concur. He suffers the fate of Tantalus. He reaches for the fruit, the branch moves. When he stoops to drink, the water goes down.

BEECHEY

If only he would consider the wishes of his public rather than pursuing his own peculiar convictions. It would be his salvation.

LESLIE

And yet, my dear Beechey, as his personal troubles increase, so the quality of his painting suffers.

BEECHEY

But, still, the man can paint.

LESLIE

For sure. He can paint a Haydon.

JONES

The return of one prodigal is worth more than gold.

BEECHEY

An essential quality for a prodigal, sir, is humility.

TURNER

He is a cracked pot. He's heading for a fall.

He goes off into the house.

LESLIE

Gentleman, are we as one?

BEECHEY

Sadly. I cannot give him my support. He is not of our temper.

JONES

Alas, the Academy does not have need of Haydon so much as Haydon has need of the Academy.

They leave. Haydon is still visible on the distant horizon, striding towards the lake.

...

Exterior. Petworth House. A moonlit night. Bright lights in the house. Two men stroll along the terrace. A piano is playing inside.

In the large candle-lit room, a concert is being given to a large, enthusiastic audience. Turner is sketching.

The first of the two young ladies we saw earlier is singing a song by Rossini (in English). She is accompanied by Miss Coggins.

Lord Egremont enters. Everybody stands, including Turner, but he beckons them all to sit. The song ends, to much applause.

The Second Young Lady enters the room, and rushes over to her friend. They giggle together.

A YOUNG MAN gets up and speaks.

YOUNG MAN

With Your Lordship's permission,
ladies and gentlemen, our next
offering, we hope, is of a somewhat
more playful nature.

LORD EGREMONT

Playful as you wish.

YOUNG MAN

Thank you.

He picks up a clarinet and proceeds to play it badly. The First Young Lady and Miss Coggins are put out. Turner winces in an amused way.

FIRST YOUNG LADY

(Singing)

*I'm a poor simple girl
So excuse me, sir, pray.
I am just one and twenty
the first of next May.
I never do harm,
but I tend to my farm.
I'm up early and late,
and though humble my state.
I don't envy my betters
but bear 'em good will.
And I'm called Pretty Kitty -
Pretty Kitty,
Pretty Kitty,
The maid of the mill.
I have lovers in plenty
Come hither to woo.
If they will be so teasing,
pray what can I do?
I'm good-tempered
and kind and a youth to my mind
Who is open and free
would be happy with me -
But they all are so stupid
that none of them will
Pop the question to Kitty -
Pretty Kitty -
The maid of the mill.*

All have been much amused throughout the course of the song, although, to Turner's wry amusement, a SMALL ECCLESIASTICAL MAN ran out in disgust at the "lovers in plenty". Loud applause at the end.

...

On a steamer at sea. Turner, his bag on his shoulder, picks his way through the passengers. A FIDDLER plays a nautical tune. Turner goes up some stairs to the upper deck. He stands by an UNHAPPY YOUNG COUPLE. The youth is trying to coax his grumpy partner. She is having none of it, and leaves. The embarrassed young man tips his hat at Turner, and follows her. Turner watches as the Fiddler concludes. Applause. The Fiddler bows.

...

Now Turner is at a busy seaside town, on the seafront. Passing fish and vegetable vendors, and many folk out strolling or chatting, he stops by a small house, and inspects it. He reads a card in the window. An ELDERLY MAN is sitting on a stool, smoking his pipe.

TURNER

Good day to you, sir.

MAN

Good day to thee.

TURNER

You be a lodgings, then?

MAN

It be, yes.

TURNER

(Indicating an upstairs
room)

This chamber, 'tis available?

MAN

It is.

TURNER

May I peruse it?

Taking his time, the man gets up and goes into the house. He calls to a woman who is beating a rug in the back yard. Turner looks out to sea.

MAN

Mrs. Booth! There be a gentleman.

MRS BOOTH stops beating the rug, and comes to the front door.

MRS BOOTH

Good day to you, sir.

TURNER

Good day to you, madam.

MRS BOOTH

Are you seeking lodgings?

TURNER

Indeed I am.

MRS BOOTH

Here, Mr Booth.

She gives her husband the wicker carpet beater.

TURNER

Your top front, 'tis available?

MRS BOOTH

Maybe, sir, yes.

TURNER

May I peruse it?

MRS BOOTH

Indeed, sir. If you'd care to follow me.

They go into the house and up the stairs. Mrs Booth leads the way.

MRS BOOTH

You just come off the boat?

TURNER

Indeed.

MRS BOOTH

The 'Maggie' or the 'Billy'?

TURNER

The 'Maggie'.

MRS BOOTH

'Twas early today.

TURNER

We'd the best of the tide.

They enter a bright room with a double bed.

MRS BOOTH

There. This be my bettermost chamber.

TURNER

Exceeding homely.

MRS BOOTH

I do thank you, sir. You're looking at the finest view in Margate. They do say this town be the first place in England the sun do reach of a morning.

(She opens the window)

Now, all my linen is freshly aired, clean and sweet-smelling, and I can lay a fire for you should you require. Now, sir, my terms is one guinea for the week with no meals or full board for an extra fifteen and sixpence. And I'm afraid I do have to ask for a small deposit and a reference.

Turner gives her a bank note.

MRS BOOTH

Five pounds!

TURNER

'Tis my reference and deposit.

MRS BOOTH

I can't take this, sir. 'Tis far too much.

TURNER

Refund the balance on departure. That suit you, madam?

MRS BOOTH

I do thank ye, sir. Well, I should introduce myself. My name is Mrs. Booth. And you, sir?

TURNER

Beg your pardon?

MRS BOOTH
I was asking your name, sir.

TURNER
Mallard.

MRS BOOTH
Mr. Mallard. Well, I do hope
you'll be most comfortable here,
Mr. Mallard. Now, is there
anything else I can provide for
you?

TURNER
A small bowl of water, madam, if
you'd be so kind.

MRS BOOTH
Might that be a glass of water?

TURNER
No. A bowl.

MRS BOOTH
Very well, sir. I shall bring that
up for you.

She leaves.

...

A few minutes later, she climbs the stairs, holding a bowl.
Turner is in the bedroom. She knocks on the door.

TURNER
Yes?

MRS BOOTH
Found you a small bowl, sir. I
hope this do suit your
requirements.

TURNER
Indeed.

MRS BOOTH
Where would you like I should put
it for you?

TURNER
Upon the windowsill, if you'd be so
kind.

She places it down.

MRS BOOTH

Good. Oh, dear. Do be coming along blowing now. Well, I shall serve your supper downstairs in the parlour at six of the clock. And if you ever feel the need of a bit of company, you'd be more than welcome to join Mr. Booth and I in our kitchen.

TURNER

I would not wish to impose, madam.

MRS BOOTH

Not at all, Mr. Mallard. We should be glad of your company.

She goes out. Turner proceeds to unpack his work materials.

...

Later. Turner sits at the table by the window in Mrs Booth's parlour, looking out to sea. He is eating his supper. Mrs Booth enters with a jug.

MRS BOOTH

I'll top up your ale, Mr. Mallard.

TURNER

Thank you kindly, madam.

She pours the beer.

MRS BOOTH

I hope you're enjoying your supper.

TURNER

Mmm.

MRS BOOTH

Oh, good. Some folk do find shackles too salty for their taste.

TURNER

Can never be too salty for me, madam.

Mrs Booth giggles.

...

Turner skips along a wide, empty beach.

...

Later. Dusk. In Mr and Mrs Booth's kitchen. Turner sits at the table, Mr Booth by the fireplace. Mrs Booth brings in two glasses of sherry, and gives one to Turner.

MRS BOOTH

There, Mr. Mallard. This'll warm you up. No, no, sit yourself down. I can squeeze around here, just about, these days. So, you had a good walk, then?

MR BOOTH

As far as Broadstairs and back.

MRS BOOTH

Oh, dear. That is a long way. You'll sleep well tonight.

TURNER

Your very good health, madam. Sir.

MRS BOOTH

Very good health to you too, sir.

TURNER

Will you not take a drink yourself?

MR BOOTH

I ain't touched a drop this many a long year.

MRS BOOTH

He did used to enjoy a tippie, though that were long before I knew him.

TURNER

Man of the sea?

MRS BOOTH
He was, weren't he?

MR BOOTH
Ship's carpenter.

TURNER
Carpenter? Noble craft. What did
you ply? Whalers? Spicers?
Traders?

MR BOOTH
Slavers. For my sins.

MRS BOOTH
He don't like to talk about it,
though.

MR BOOTH
Africa, Zanzibar, the Indies. Such
terrible sufferings I did see.
Treated like animals, they was.
Worse than.

TURNER
The howling sound of sorrow.

MR BOOTH
Yes. Changed my life, it did.

MRS BOOTH
It did there.

MR BOOTH
Led me back to chapel.

TURNER
Humans.

MRS BOOTH
Humans can be dreadful cruel. I
watch them boys down there in the
sands whipping them poor donkeys.
Mind you, you're better off being a
donkey than them wretched souls on
the slave ships. So, are you
familiar with Margate, Mr. Mallard?

TURNER
As a boy.

MRS BOOTH
You come here on your holidays,
then?

TURNER
 Schooling, two years.

MRS BOOTH
 Oh, yes, Margate be famous for its
 schools.

TURNER
 Coleman's.

MRS BOOTH
 Mr. Coleman. I do remember he, up
 there by the Dane.

TURNER
 Back of the old town. I lost two
 dear friends.

MRS BOOTH
 I am sorry.

TURNER
 Scrofula.

MRS BOOTH
 Oh, yes. Terrible sickness.

MR BOOTH
 Aye.

TURNER
 Long time ago.

Pause. Sadness.

...

Another busy London street.

...

A LADY knocks at Turner's front door. Hannah opens it.

LADY
 Good afternoon.

HANNAH
 Good afternoon, madam.

MRS SOMERVILLE
It is Mrs Somerville -

HANNAH
Yes. You are expected.

MRS SOMERVILLE
Thank you most kindly.
(She enters.)
What an elegant residence.

...

In Turner's drawing room. Mrs Somerville is sitting with Turner Snr.

TURNER SNR
Have you come far, Mrs Somerville?

MRS SOMERVILLE
Oh, yes, indeed. All the way from Chelsea. I took the steamer to Westminster; about an hour.

TURNER SNR
Was the river busy?

MRS SOMERVILLE
Extremely. You can see the whole world on the Thames.

Turner enters.

TURNER
Mrs Somerville.

MRS SOMERVILLE
Good afternoon, Mr. Turner.

TURNER
My apologies if I have forced you to wait upon me.

MRS SOMERVILLE
Not at all. I have enjoyed a most pleasant interlude with your father.

TURNER
You find yourself well?

MRS SOMERVILLE
Passing fair, thank you. And you?

TURNER

Indeed. Doctor Somerville likewise?

MRS SOMERVILLE

Oh, yes, he's much engaged in administering to the poor veterans. Well, now, it's a beautiful sunny day. Just perfect for our experiment. I have everything I need here in my wee bag.

TURNER SNR

Are we going to witness an explosion?

MRS SOMERVILLE

Goodness me, no, I hope not.

TURNER

I'm astounded you have all your paraphernalia contained in yon small pouch.

MRS SOMERVILLE

Indeed it is, Mr. Turner. Everything except God's good sunlight.

TURNER

Daddy, Mrs Somerville is a natural philosopher.

TURNER SNR

Is she, now?

TURNER

Mathematician, astronomer, geologist.

MRS SOMERVILLE

The universe is a wondrous thing, is it not, Mr. Turner?

TURNER SNR

It is, to be sure.

MRS SOMERVILLE

The planets and the stars. The oceans and the tides. The clouds and the air. Mountains, volcanoes.

TURNER SNR

The tides be subject to the effect
of the moon.

MRS SOMERVILLE

Quite so. The mysterious force of
gravity. It is my strong belief
that all things on this earth are
connected. Nothing exists in
isolation.

TURNER

Indeed.

TURNER SNR

The rain falls, the sun shines and
the onions grow.

MRS SOMERVILLE

Oh, yes.

TURNER

Daddy likes to affect the pretence
of being a dunce. He is in fact a
man of high intellect. He taught
me to read and write.

MRS SOMERVILLE

Is that so?

TURNER SNR

Education is an important thing.

MRS SOMERVILLE

It is indeed most important for
everyone. I myself am presently
engaged in the tutoring of my
children.

TURNER

That is indeed commendable.

Hannah has entered with the tea tray.

MRS SOMERVILLE

Which is a privilege that was not
afforded to me. I am an
uneducated, self-taught Scotch
woman.

TURNER

Mrs Somerville, you are what you
are, as are we, Daddy.

TURNER SNR

True.

Hannah gives Mrs Somerville a cup of tea.

MRS SOMERVILLE

Thank you. And what was your profession, Mr. Turner?

TURNER

Daddy was the finest barber in Covent Garden.

TURNER SNR

I had some success in the business.

TURNER

Wigmaker. He was a master of the razor and the brush.

MRS SOMERVILLE

You're the master of the brush now, Mr. Turner.

Hannah gives the old man his tea.

TURNER SNR

My little lad could draw afore he could read and write.

TURNER

Sat in the corner of the shop scratching away with the chalk and charcoal.

TURNER SNR

I'd stick his pictures in the window.

TURNER

And sell 'em, all of 'em.

TURNER SNR

For two or three shillings apiece on occasion.

MRS SOMERVILLE

Do you have children yourself, Mr. Turner.

TURNER

I do not, Mrs Somerville.

Hannah and Turner Snr barely exchange looks.

...

A little later in Turner's studio. Turner and his father are assisting Mrs Somerville as she organises her experiment. Hannah looks on.

MRS SOMERVILLE

Thank you, Mr. Turner. Have you ever seen a prism?

TURNER SNR

I have not.

She produces one from her bag.

MRS SOMERVILLE

There it is.

TURNER SNR

That is a thing of beauty.

MRS SOMERVILLE

Shortly you shall witness a rainbow passing through it.

She places it on the window frame.

TURNER

Sir Isaac Newton, Daddy.

MRS SOMERVILLE

Gentlemen, might I request that you close the shutters, please?

They proceed to do so.

TURNER

Daddy. Tell us when to cease, Mrs Somerville.

MRS SOMERVILLE

We need to create an aperture to strengthen the colours. There.

TURNER

Daddy.

They stop closing the shutters.

MRS SOMERVILLE
Let us put the paper in place.

TURNER
Daddy, some tacks for Mrs
Somerville.

MRS SOMERVILLE
No, no tacks, Mr. Turner. The
metal could contaminate the
experiment. A wee nub of wax.
Paper.

Taking the wax from a small tin, she attaches a sheet of paper to an easel they have placed on the table. Then she tears off a tiny corner of paper.

TURNER
And what is the purpose of the
small piece of paper?

MRS SOMERVILLE
I shall cover the bottom half of
the needle so that it is not
exposed.

She now takes a hammer out of her bag. Then she conceals the needle in a piece of cloth.

TURNER
And what is it you are about now,
Mrs Somerville?

MRS SOMERVILLE
You'll have to wait and see, won't
you?

TURNER
Daddy, I wager that is the first
time you've witnessed a hammer
being produced from a lady's
reticule.

TURNER SNR
For certain, 'tis.

Mrs Somerville now hammers the folded cloth vigorously.

TURNER
You have the arm of a blacksmith,
Mrs Somerville.

MRS SOMERVILLE

There, now. That has thrown all those wee particles into chaos.

TURNER SNR

Particles into chaos!

TURNER

Mrs Somerville, what is the element contained within the violet light such as magnetises the material?

MRS SOMERVILLE

That is what as yet, Mr. Turner, I do not know.

TURNER

The majesty of mystery.

MRS SOMERVILLE

Indeed. Now, let us allow nature to take its course. Although we will have to adjust the position of the easel from time to time.

TURNER

Indeed. As mighty Apollo moves across his heavenly tract.

MRS SOMERVILLE

Yes.

...

Moments later. The Turners show Mrs Somerville into their gallery.

TURNER SNR

Three steps down, Mrs. Somerville.

TURNER

Take care.

MRS SOMERVILLE

Oh, my goodness me. Mr. Turner, I am quite overwhelmed.

TURNER

Do as you wish. View as you wish.

Mrs Somerville looks at two paintings of ships.

MRS SOMERVILLE
Oh, my. These are breathtaking,
are they not? My dear late father
would have much appreciated them.

TURNER
A naval man, I believe.

MRS SOMERVILLE
Indeed, he was a vice admiral.

TURNER SNR
We have 'The Battle of Trafalgar'
over here.

TURNER
Was he there, your father?

MRS SOMERVILLE
No, he was at Camperdown.

TURNER SNR
Lord Nelson's flagship, 'The
Victory'.

They look at the painting.

MRS SOMERVILLE
Indeed.

TURNER
It's a sketch for the painting.
Commissioned by the King.

MRS SOMERVILLE
Is that so?

TURNER
Two years in the making. He didn't
like it.

MRS SOMERVILLE
Did he not.

TURNER
No.

TURNER SNR
Too good for him.

They laugh.

MRS SOMERVILLE

Two years. It takes me only half an hour to paint a picture.

TURNER SNR

So you are an artist, Mrs. Somerville?

MRS SOMERVILLE

I don't think we can quite use that term in the presence of Mr. Turner.

TURNER

Nevertheless, Daddy, Mrs. Somerville is a fine watercolourist.

MRS SOMERVILLE

You flatter me. What an epic storm.

TURNER

Rock crushing a house in Switzerland. Calais sands, women digging for bait. I don't care for that much.

MRS SOMERVILLE

My. What have we here?

TURNER

It's Hannibal crossing the Alps.

TURNER SNR

Do you see the elephant?

MRS SOMERVILLE

An elephant?

TURNER SNR

He's in there somewhere.

MRS SOMERVILLE

Are you teasing me, Mr. Turner?

TURNER SNR

By no means, madam. Can you find him?

Mrs Somerville scrutinises the painting very closely.

MRS SOMERVILLE

Well, no, I cannot.

TURNER SNR

There he is.

He points out the tiny elephant in the distance. She laughs.

TURNER

Daddy's little jest.

MRS SOMERVILLE

'Tis a terrifying scene.

TURNER SNR

The elements dwarfing the elephants.

TURNER

Hubris.

...

Back in the studio, Hannah watches from a distance as Mrs Somerville, with the aid of the needle floating in a bowl of water, demonstrates her experiment to the Turners.

MRS SOMERVILLE

There. Shall I make it do a wee dance? So, the end of the needle that was exposed to the violet light has produced a magnetic north pole.

TURNER SNR

Like a compass.

MRS SOMERVILLE

Exactly so. Whereas, Mr. Turner, had I done the same experiment using the red end of the spectrum, this needle would not have been magnetised. I have from time to time, attempted it with the green and the blue, and it has succeeded on occasion, but not consistently.

TURNER

Colour is contradictory.

MRS SOMERVILLE

Well, is it, Mr. Turner? Colour is absolute.

TURNER

Sublime but contradictory, yet
harmonious.

MRS SOMERVILLE

You are a man of great vision, Mr.
Turner. The universe is chaotic
and you make us see it. In natural
philosophy nothing can ever be
proved, only disproved.

TURNER

The purity of your prism, the
contamination of my palette.
Natural light, blackness. White is
the power of good, black is the
devil.

...

At the Royal Academy. The lecture theatre. Turner addresses
a full house. Mostly men, a few women. Turner Snr sits on
the front row, next to an ELDERLY MAN with an ear trumpet.

TURNER

Transparent bodies depend so much
upon what is opposed to them,
having no colour, that they take
every one offered. Water often
possesses colour, but colour is not
imparted to its reflections or
refractions, like a coloured glass
when everything seen is vitiated by
that colour. Even the purest
mirror gives a tone to the sky, and
as the colour is increased, it
destroys all the colour of nature
by its ... by its own dullness,
while water often seems to
challenge the sky for ...
brightness, and ... when possessing
colour,

Turner Snr coughs.

TURNER

...its reflections of objects
appear more possible.

(MORE)

TURNER (CONT'D)

In short, their effects are like their qualities. One repels the immediate ray,

Turner Snr continues his coughing, which gets worse. His neighbour pats him on the back.

TURNER

...the other absorbs it. The one transparent while the mirror is opaque. How can they appear the same?

He looks concerned about his father.

...

Turner is painting in his studio. Through the window, he can see his father outside in the yard, chopping wood. Hannah takes a chamber pot to the outside lavatory. The old man stops his labours. He is obviously unwell. Turner looks concerned.

...

Later, Turner Snr is mulling (grinding) yellow paint. Turner is at work on the same canvas as in the previous scene.

TURNER

Daddy, cease your labour. Go and sit in your chair.

TURNER SNR

I can't leave this.

TURNER

It'll keep for the half-hour. Go and peruse your newspaper.

The old man takes no notice. Then he accidentally drops a palette knife on the floor. Turner goes over and picks it up.

TURNER

Do not stoop. Go and rest your bones.

The old man looks at his son, defiant, but helpless.

...

Turner walks briskly down another bustling London street.

...

Turner's house. In his workshop, Turner Snr is stretching a canvas. He is coughing badly. This gets worse; he stops working, and staggers out of the room.

...

Turner enters his house, and, without having taken off his hat and coat, he rushes upstairs to his father's bedroom. Comforted by Hannah, the old man is sitting on the side of the bed, inhaling steam from a bowl.

TURNER

What's occurring?

HANNAH

He's struggling.

TURNER

Are you rattling? Come on, bring it up.

...

Later. Turner Snr is lying in bed. He is rambling. Turner sits by him. Hannah hovers in the doorway.

TURNER SNR

No, indeed not, sir. I shall. I shall tell her. I will tell her. I ought to have told her afore. Years ago.

TURNER

Who do you speak of, Daddy?

TURNER SNR

Afore they took her away.
Eastertide, the good Lord took her
from us. We did not do right by
her. Poor woman.

TURNER

She was a lunatic. We didn't have
no choice, Daddy. She made our
life a living hell.

TURNER SNR

She was your mother, curse her!
Show her due respect, boy. The
bitch.

Pause.

TURNER SNR

My little lad.

TURNER

Daddy.

Turner Snr dies. Tears well up in Turner's eyes.

Fraught, Hannah comes and stands near Turner.

...

In small boat by a river bank. Turner is fishing with a rod
and line. He sits still, sad and reflective.

...

Some rough outdoor corner of London. Turner strides past men
and women of all ages and classes, mostly sitting. They look
as though they are waiting for something.

Turner ascends a rickety wooden staircase, passing a couple
of men.

He enters a brothel. The BROTHEL KEEPER, a middle-aged woman, is sitting on a sofa. A YOUNG WOMAN sits in the corner.

BROTHEL KEEPER
Good afternoon, sir.

TURNER
Good day to you, madam.

BROTHEL KEEPER
It's been a long while, ain't it?

TURNER
Yeah.

BROTHEL KEEPER
May I offer you a refreshment?

TURNER
No, thank you kindly.

BROTHEL KEEPER
Champagne? No mind, sir. I regret all my lovely girls are occupied. But we do have young Eliza here, who I do not believe you've had the pleasure of previous. She has a pleasing countenance, when she smiles.

PROSTITUTE
Good day, sir.

TURNER
Good day to you, miss.

BROTHEL KEEPER
Show the gentleman to your chamber, dear.

PROSTITUTE
It's this way, sir.

Turner follows her out.

...

In a corridor they pass a fully-clad man and two half-dressed women.

Then in her room the Prostitute stands with one foot on the bed. She is wearing a red stocking.

Turner puts his bag down. The Prostitute shows him her bare bottom.

TURNER

Very fine.

PROSTITUTE

I do extras.

She raises the front of her skirt.

TURNER

No, no, no, no. Remove the bodice.

(She does so)

Expose your breasts.

(She starts to take her
breasts out)

No, no. No. Lay upon the bed.

She lies on her back, and complies with Turner's instructions as he manoeuvres her into position.

TURNER

Part your legs. Crook your knee.

Right arm as thus. Hand upon the

head. No. As in despair.

He goes to the end of the bed and checks her pose. Then he gets a chair, and places it in the same position. Having checked the pose again, he takes a pencil and sketchbook from his bag, and starts to draw her. Pause.

TURNER

Eliza or Liza?

PROSTITUTE

Eliza. Or Liza.

TURNER

Your age?

PROSTITUTE

Twenty-two, sir.

TURNER

Twenty-two?

Turner now breaks down. Uncontrollable tears grow into a painful howl of despair. Without breaking her pose, the prostitute watches him.

PROSTITUTE

Would you like something to drink,
sir?

TURNER

(Still crying)

No, thank you, miss. Now expose
your breasts.

She sits up, and starts to undo the laces of her corset.
Turner continues to draw her.

...

Hannah is in her bedroom, sitting by the window. She reads a
book with a magnifying glass.

...

Turner is painting 'Death on a Pale Horse'.

...

In the drawing room. Hannah returns her book to a glass-
fronted bookcase, and chooses another book. Turner joins
her. Then he takes her from behind, the two of them standing
up, fully-clothed, pushing against the bookcase. It is over
quickly. He leaves. Her face shows pain and joy.

...

Silhouetted against the sky, Turner strides along a cliff
top. In the distance a tiny ancient chapel perches on a hill-
top. A pack of wild horses emerge from nowhere and follow
Turner as he descends over the cliff top.

...

Now, as the sun sets over the sea, Turner sits on a hillside, drawing the view.

...

And on yet another cliff top, Turner watches the sky. A flock of birds fly by.

...

Margate, the sea front.

Turner makes his way past the bustling marketeers and townsfolk. He arrives at Mrs Booth's house and knocks at the door. After a few moments, she answers. She is dressed in black.

MRS BOOTH

Good day, sir.

TURNER

Madam.

MRS BOOTH

You be seeking lodgings?

TURNER

Indeed.

MRS BOOTH

I do know'ee. Mr. Duckworth.

TURNER

Mallard.

MRS BOOTH

Oh, Mr. Mallard. Of course. Well, you be lucky. The room is free.

TURNER

Splendid.

MRS BOOTH

Well, do come in. There. It be most pleasant to see you again.

They go in.

...

A little later. In her parlour, Mrs Booth is putting out a pot of tea as Turner is coming down the stairs. He has taken off his jacket. He comes into the room.

MRS BOOTH

Mr. Mallard. Everything satisfactory in your chamber?

TURNER

Most agreeable.

MRS BOOTH

Good. Well, you sit there and make yourself comfy. I expect you'll be tired after your journey. Now, I have not poured your tea for it is fresh in the pot.

TURNER

(Sitting down)

No matter. Suits me, brewed and stewed.

MRS BOOTH

Now, that I do remember, Mr. Mallard. And will you take a biscuit?

TURNER

No, thank you, madam. I purchased a potato on the boat.

MRS BOOTH

I should think that were all you could manage on the steamer.

TURNER

It was somewhat turbulent.

MRS BOOTH

I shall leave you to take your refreshment.

TURNER

Madam, may I apprehend you with my condolences.

MRS BOOTH

I do thank you, sir.

TURNER

My sympathies, commiserations, for the loss of your dear departed man.

MRS BOOTH

Well, he were a dear man. 'Tis twice in my life now I have found myself a widow. My first husband were taken from me when I was but a young woman.

TURNER

How was he taken?

MRS BOOTH

He were foying over there on Goodwin Sands.

TURNER

A life-saver.

MRS BOOTH

Aye. He did save many a life but in the end he could not save his own. We never did find him, poor soul. My boy were eight year old when he did lose his father.

TURNER

I was eight when I lost my little sister.

MRS BOOTH

I am sorry. Well, 'tis the way of things.

(Pause.)

You still making your nice little pictures, Mr. Mallard?

TURNER

(Amused)

Mmmm.

MRS BOOTH

There.

...

Back in London, Turner enters busily through his front door, goes straight into his studio and proceeds to get on with things. Hannah comes in.

HANNAH

Mr. Billy. Welcome home.

Turner gives her a bowl.

TURNER

Dirty water.

She empties it into a bucket.

HANNAH

Pleasant trip? Your order came.

TURNER

Did he send the cobalt blue?

HANNAH

I put it in a jar. Chrome yellow, scarlet lake, lead white.

TURNER

Canvases?

HANNAH

He put 'em downstairs for me. Two six by fours, three four by threes.

TURNER

Megilp?

HANNAH

Next week.

TURNER

(growls)

HANNAH

Was it a pleasant trip?

He doesn't reply. She shrugs and goes out, picking up his umbrella as she goes, and putting it in the hall stand.

...

His bag on his shoulder, Turner ascends a grand staircase, and enters a large hall, the walls of which are covered with paintings. Men, mostly in hats and coats, are standing or sitting or up ladders, adding the finishing touches to their paintings. This is Varnishing Day at the Royal Academy.

Turner enters, and joins THREE SENIOR MEN, who are standing in the middle of the room.

SHEE

Good morning, Mr. Turner.

TURNER

Martin, Sir Billy, Gussy.

CALLCOTT

Good day to you, Billy.

SHEE

Delighted you could join us.

BEECHEY

Damn fine spectacle this year,
Billy.

TURNER

Aha!

He spots his own painting and goes towards it, greeting Stothard, the very old man with the ear trumpet, on the way.

TURNER

A very fine day to you, Mr.
Stothard!

STOTHARD

Mr. Turner, sir.

He proceeds to his painting ('Helvoetsluys; - the City of Utrecht, 64, Going to Sea') looks at it, then moves to the painting next to it. This is 'The opening of Waterloo Bridge' by JOHN CONSTABLE, who is working on it.

TURNER

Constable.

CONSTABLE

Turner.

Turner now joins two more artists, one of whom, EASTLAKE, is up a ladder.

TURNER
Jonesy. Carlo.

JONES
William.

TURNER
The Hanging Committee!

JONES
You approve?

TURNER
'Tis well hung.

EASTLAKE
Grazie.

TURNER
Prego.

Turner returns to the President, Shee, and his companions.

SHEE
Would everything be to your
satisfaction, Mr. Turner?

TURNER
It is indeed, Mr. President. 'Tis
a splendid cornucopia.

SHEE
Cornucopia!

Shee walks away. Turner joins TWO ARTISTS on a ladder.

LESLIE
Good morning, Turner.

TURNER
Good morning to you, Mr. Leslie.
Rabbie.

ROBERTS
Good morning, Mr. Turner.

TURNER
My other piece, where is it
located?

LESLIE
We placed it in the ante-room.

TURNER
The ante-room.

Turner moves away and greets Carew as he passes him.

Mr. Carew!

CAREW
Turner.

Turner joins AN ARTIST putting the finishing touches to his painting.

TURNER
Stanny.

STANFIELD
Hello, Mr. Turner, sir.

TURNER
Is it for His Majesty?

STANFIELD
Indeed. I hope it meets his expectations.

TURNER
It will.

Turner goes through a doorway, greeting a UNIFORMED MAN.

TURNER
Grout.

GROUT
Mr. Turner.

Turner proceeds down the corridor into the ante-room, in which a GENTLEMAN is standing by a painting.

TURNER
Sir John Soane.

SOANE
J.M.W. Turner Esquire.

TURNER
As I live and breathe.

SOANE
My dear friend!

TURNER
Find yourself well, John?

SOANE
Relishing the day.

TURNER
Capital.

SOANE
Only now I was admiring your
seascape.

(Referring to Turner's
painting, 'Staffa,
Fingal's Cave', which
hangs on the wall.)

TURNER
There she is. Mr. Pickersgill.

PICKERSGILL is a man sitting at the end of the room.

PICKERSGILL
Good morning, William.

TURNER
He has the air of despondency upon
him.

SOANE
He is slighted.

TURNER
For why?

PICKERSGILL
Yet again in the ante-room.

TURNER
They hang us where they will,
Pickers. Take a guzzle of brown
sherry.

Beechey enters and joins Turner and Soane.

BEECHEY
Damn fine storm you have there,
Billy.

TURNER
Nimbus, Sir Billy. Nimbus.

Turner leaves the, and again returns to the main gallery,
where he again scrutinises his 'Helvoetsluys' painting
alongside its neighbour, Constable's 'Waterloo Bridge', on
which the latter continues to work.

Then he joins Eastlake.

TURNER
Carlo the Salamander.

EASTLAKE
Amico mio. Harmony and unity,
William.

TURNER
(Referring to Eastlake's
portrait of a young
woman.)
Chemise.

EASTLAKE
Chemise?

TURNER
(gesturing)
Lower!

Eastlake takes a moment to register what Turner is suggesting. Then -

EASTLAKE
Molto bene!

They both laugh. Turner moves on.

TURNER
Jonesy!

Another painter intercepts him.

CALLCOTT
I want you to see -

TURNER
What?

CALLCOTT leads Turner to an Italian view.

CALLCOTT
Remember?

TURNER
Remind me.

CALLCOTT
Pisa.

TURNER
 Oh, Pisa! Fine around there,
 Gussy.

He points to part of the painting.

CALLCOTT
 You think so?

TURNER
 Oh, yeh.

Turner goes to Jones, who is working on a historical painting.

TURNER
 Nelson?

JONES
 With two arms.

They laugh. Turner moves on. Leslie is still up the ladder. His painting depicts a fashionable salon.

TURNER
 Mr. Leslie.

LESLIE
 Turner.

TURNER
 (Referring to Leslie's
 painting)
 Little maid, in a gamboge gown,
 left foot instep, touch of
 highlight.

LESLIE
 Thank you, Turner.

ROBERTS
 Paintings always benefit his
 remarks.

Turner moves into the corridor, where Carew, Soane and Stothard are inspecting a marble portrait on a plinth.

TURNER
 Carew! This your man?

CAREW
 'Tis he.

TURNER
Sports an elegant nostril, does he
not, Sir John?

SOANE
Splendid nostrils.

CAREW
Thank you kindly.

STOTHARD
(Brandishing his ear
trumpet)
What did you say?

TURNER
Elegant pair of nostrils, Mr.
Stothard!

STOTHARD
Oh, yes. Yes, indeed.

Carew laughs uproariously. Turner moves on.

...

A few minutes later, in the main gallery. The Academicians stand about, chatting quietly. Constable, sitting on a stool, continues to apply red paint to his canvas.

Armed with a paintbrush, Turner walks briskly up to his own grey picture, puts a bold, red, blob right in the middle, and leaves.

The Academicians gather round the painting. Constable gets up, astonished.

SHEE
Why on earth would he go and do
that?

EASTLAKE
I believe Mr. Turner knows well
enough what he's doing.

SHEE
You think so? He's ruined a
masterpiece.

JONES
I think not.

General consternation and reaction. Carew laughs uproariously. Constable puts on his coat.

CONSTABLE

He's been here and fired a gun.

He storms out of the gallery. The following is mixed in with general murmur, whilst, just as Constable leaves, Haydon enters, and looks round the whole exhibition. Carew continues to laugh.

SHEE

No, no.

BEECHEY

John, you must not upset yourself like this.

SHEE

The man's impossible. I mean why would he go and destroy a perfectly good painting?

ROBERTS

Sheer mockery.

MAN

My sympathy's with Constable.

BEECHEY

He's got a damn fine picture here and he's made a damn mockery of it.

EASTLAKE

There's method in the madness gentlemen.

SHEE

If that is method it is pure madness.

MAN

But, what is it?

SHEE

Do stop that prattling laughter, Mr. Carew!

Carew doesn't stop laughing.

CALLCOTT

I wager we've not seen the end of this.

SHEE

He may surprise us yet.

In the corridor, Haydon bumps into Turner, who is just coming out of the ante-room.

TURNER

Haydon. Hey!

Turner returns to the main gallery. Watched by all, and using his forefinger, his thumb and a cloth, he turns the red blob into a buoy.

SHEE

Ah, Mr. Turner.

BEECHEY

We were just wondering if ...

CALLCOTT

I said he wasn't finished.

MAN

It's a buoy.

SHEE

Bravo! Bravo!

General celebration and applause. Turner gives them all a sardonic look, and leaves.

...

In the ante-room we are looking at a painting of a donkey.

PICKERSGILL

Can you explain your rendition?

HAYDON

It needs no explanation, sir. 'Tis our Redeemer's conveyance into Jerusalem, plain as day.

PICKERSGILL

Blasphemy!

Turner has returned.

TURNER

You faring well, Mr. Haydon?

HAYDON
This will be the finish of me!

He storms out.

TURNER
Fifty pounds!

Turner shakes his head, and shares the moment with Soane, who is adjacent.

Haydon marches into the main gallery. He goes up to Leslie, who is standing with Eastlake and Callcott.

HAYDON
Thank you, sir. Thank you, sir, for your charity.

LESLIE
Haydon?

HAYDON
You have been most kind. Most kind in your placement. You have finished me. You might as well have taken my painting and put it in the outhouse. Better yet, taken it out of this building and thrown it in the Fleet.

A crowd gathers. Much of the following dialogue overlaps.

SHEE
Please lower your voice, Mr. Haydon.

LESLIE
Haydon, I am hard... hard set to understand your indignation.

SHEE
Mr. Haydon.

HAYDON
And as... as for you, as for you, my pupil... my pupil.

EASTLAKE
Your painting, sir, is hanging next door to that of Mr. Turner.

LESLIE
It is in fine company.

HAYDON

This is treachery. This is treachery! And do not talk to me of Turner's work.

JONES

Stand down, man!

SHEE

Please, please, please, please lower your voice, Mr. Haydon. Just...

HAYDON (OS)

His... his pictures look as if they were painted by somebody born without hands!

Pickersgill enters, followed by Soane and Turner, who watch from the doorway.

SHEE

Mr. Haydon. What, what is your quarrel?

LESLIE

Please.

HAYDON

What principles have you applied other than those that I gave...

SHEE

Mr. Haydon, please lower your voice.

JONES

Have a care man.

SHEE

Mr. Haydon, please... Mr. Haydon, please lower your voice.

HAYDON

I will not, sir!

SHEE

What... What is your quarrel here?

HAYDON

I have no respect for you. I certainly do not acknowledge your presidency. It should have been... It should have been Wilkie.

General discussion and comments.

SHEE

Mr. Haydon, I will not have personal attacks like this on the Academy floor.

HAYDON

You will have what I choose to give you, sir.

SHEE

This would be one of the many reasons why you were never accepted here, Mr. Haydon.

Soane and Pickersgill join the group around Haydon.

HAYDON

This man... This man has spent a quarter of a century doing everything in his power to malign me.

SHEE

I have done nothing of the sort.

HAYDON

And spoil my genius.

SHEE

Please, refrain from this shouting, Mr. Haydon.

HAYDON

I will not!

SHEE

I will have you forcibly removed.

HAYDON

Yes, do it! Do it! Remove me from your nest of portrait painters!

Alone, Turner watches from the doorway.

JONES

Have a care!

BEECHEY

What, sir, is wrong with being a portrait painter?

SHEE

Please William. William, please
don't...

HAYDON

What does it do to elevate the
art..?

BEECHEY

I received the accolade from the
hand of His Majesty the King,

SHEE

William, don't put him up...

BEECHEY

for painting portraits and damn
good ones too, sir!

HAYDON

Oh, God, I bow to him!

PICKERSGILL

Haydon, can I point out that I too
hang in the inferior chamber?

HAYDON

I care not for your work, sir. I
care not a fig.

PICKERSGILL

At least my work does not represent
self-portrait as ass.

SHEE

Mr. Pickersgill...!

HAYDON

Give me those...

Haydon knocks Pickersgill's hat off. A general struggle
ensues

HAYDON

Unhand me!

SHEE

Remove this man!

HAYDON

(shouting)
You swines! You swines!

Turner quietly leaves the gallery.

SOANE

Mr. Haydon, sir: with deep regret I must inform you that I am on my way to the porters unless you feel free to leave of your own volition.

HAYDON

Shh... shh...

SOANE

Please, sir.

HAYDON

Stretch me no longer on this rough world. I am done with you.

He makes his way through the crowd, and leaves.

General discussion and hubbub.

...

A little later, in the ante-room. Watched by a large group of amused and enthralled Academicians, Turner works further on his painting, 'Staffa', vigorously stabbing the canvas with his brush, wiping it with a cloth, spitting at the painting, and blowing brown powder at it.

...

In a rocky, mountainous landscape, Turner walks and climbs, and stops to survey the scene.

...

At Margate, Turner wends his way through the busy vendors and passers by on the seafront. He arrives at Mrs Booth's house, where she is cleaning her windows. He makes her jump with surprise. They exchange greetings, and enter the house.

...

In Mrs Booth's parlour, Turner is seated on the sofa, Mrs Booth by the window. They are drinking sherry.

MRS BOOTH

Hmm. 'Tis nice to have a bit of company for a change. So you had a good walk, then? Weren't too chippy up there by Reculver?

TURNER

Somewhat blowy and the wind did kick up some white horses.

MRS BOOTH

Can do, this time of year. In summertime, though, 'tis a lovely calm spot for a picnic up there by the Two Sisters. But in wintertime, I have known the whole of Marine Terrace, down here, without a pane of glass left in the entire place. Oh, the glaziers do get rich.

TURNER

(laughs)

Hmm...

MRS BOOTH

When Mr. Booth and I moved in here, we had the whole place polished up, spick and span, ready for our first visitors, and the wind did blow and the sea come up. We had broken glass everywhere. It were terrible.

TURNER

Mrs. Booth, would you be so kind as to look out of the window?

MRS BOOTH

Where? What am I looking at?

TURNER

From the tip of your nose to the bridge, to the curve of your brow, you put me in mind of a Greek sculpture I'm familiar with, of Aphrodite, goddess of love.

MRS BOOTH

No... No one's ever said that about my nose before. This old snout.

TURNER

Hmm.

MRS BOOTH

Truth to tell, my eyes aren't so good these days, so when I do look in the looking-glass I be glad I cannot see so well.

TURNER

When I peruse myself in the looking-glass, I see a gargoyle.

MRS BOOTH:

Now, you be fishing for compliments, and my old Ma used to say, them that fish for compliments don't get none. Besides, 'tis what's within a person that do matter. I do not know you, Mr. Mallard, and I'm sure there be things about you that are beyond my understanding. But I believe you to be a man of great spirit and fine feeling.

TURNER

Mrs. Booth... you are a woman of profound beauty.

MRS BOOTH

Mr. Mallard... I am lost for words.

TURNER

Hmm.

A long pause. A charged moment.

...

Later. Holding a lantern, Mrs Booth climbs the stairs. She carries Turner's boots.

MRS BOOTH

Good night, Mr. Mallard, sir. I've cleaned your boots for'ee. They're by the door here.

She puts them outside his door, which he opens.

TURNER

Mrs. Booth, I thank you for a most convivial evening.

MRS BOOTH
I do thank you too, sir.

Turner pulls her towards him. They kiss.

She takes him by his hand and leads him into her bedroom, and closes her door.

...

Next morning. Turner leaves Mrs Booth's house. As he walks along the seafront, the sun rises over the bay.

...

Dusk. On a ship in the pouring rain. A MARINER is tying Turner to the mast with a long rope.

MARINER
(shouting)
If I may be so bold as to say,
mate, as I see it, you're a loose
cannon rolling round the deck!

Turner laughs.

Now a snowstorm rages. It is night. Turner absorbs the full force of the experience.

...

Mrs. Booth's parlour. Turner is sprawled on the sofa. a DOCTOR is listening to Turner's chest, as he inhales and wheezes.

DR PRICE
And out.

Turner coughs.

DR PRICE
Cover yourself up. Good man. Well,
Mr. Mallard is suffering from
bronchitis.

MRS BOOTH
Oh, there.

DR PRICE
For which we prescribe the three
Bs: bed, balsam and broth.

MRS BOOTH
Oh.

DR PRICE
To be administered in this case by
the fourth B, the admirable Mrs.
Booth.

Mrs Booth laughs.

DR PRICE
Thank you. Now, Mrs. Booth, if you
would be so good as to come up to
the house after four, I shall have
the balsam prepared.

MRS BOOTH
Indeed I shall, sir.

DR PRICE
Good day, Mr. Mallard. Rest the
body, sir, and the soul shall find
solace.

MRS BOOTH
I do thank ye, Doctor. Let me show
ye out.

DR PRICE
Good day to you, Mrs. Booth.

Mrs Booth sees Dr Price out.

MRS BOOTH
Good day to you, sir.

Turner coughs heavily into his handkerchief.

...

In his studio, Turner is painting "Snow Storm - Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth".

...

Now he enters his gallery. A middle-aged man and a young man are looking at a painting - "Slavers throwing overboard the Dead and Dying - Typhoon coming on". They are JOHN RUSKIN and his FATHER.

TURNER

Gentlemen.

RUSKIN

Ah, Mr. Turner. My father and I are marvelling at this glorious work. Er, might I be correct in remembering that we had the good fortune of viewing it at the Academy last summer?

TURNER

Indeed.

RUSKIN

Well, I must say, it is no less impressive on its second viewing... Perhaps, even more so. Is it not, Father?

RUSKIN'S FATHER

Indeed so. I recall it provoked much heated and stimulating discussion long after our viewing.

TURNER

It did not sell.

RUSKIN'S FATHER

Indeed not?

TURNER

No, Mr. Ruskin.

RUSKIN'S FATHER

I'm astonished.

RUSKIN

But it is a masterpiece.

TURNER
Thackeray reviles it.

RUSKIN
How so?

TURNER
Sublime or ridiculous, he says.

RUSKIN
Well, perhaps he should make up his mind.

TURNER
He has a sharp and cynical tongue.

RUSKIN
There is no place for cynicism in the reviewing of art.

TURNER
Hmm... 'tis of no consequence.

RUSKIN
Quite.

TURNER
It is purchasable?

RUSKIN
Enticing.

RUSKIN'S FATHER
Perhaps.

TURNER
(indicating)
Typhus epidemic amongst the cargo - slaves. Die on board - no insurance. Sling 'em in the drink - drowned dead - cash.

RUSKIN
I am struck by the column of bright white placed precisely off centre here, applied over the darkened background impasto contrasting with the scarlet and ochre hues in the upper left corner, which in turn contrasts with the presence of God, revealing to us that hope exists even in the most turbulent and illimitable of deaths.

Hannah has sat down. During the above speech, she yawns and scratches herself.

TURNER
Bluebottles.

HANNAH
Eh?

TURNER
Up in the muslin. Knock 'em out.

HANNAH
Well, I didn't put 'em there.

She gets up and goes out.

RUSKIN
Would it not sit splendidly above
the fireplace in the library,
Father?

RUSKIN'S FATHER
Er, it would, but I fear it may be
beyond our purse, John.

RUSKIN
No.

TURNER
I'm sure some arrangement can be
come to, sir.

Hannah returns, holding a large stick, from which she draws a sword.

HANNAH
Mind your heads.

She pokes the ceiling drape with the sword.

TURNER
You're just... You're just knocking
'em up and down. Scrape 'em out.
No, look... Now you've just knocked
it over there.

Bemused, the Ruskins watch this operation.

...

Margate. Turner sketches boats outside Mrs Booth's house. She arrives with a shopping basket and joins him for a few moments.

...

Mrs Booth is sweeping her front doorway. Turner comes down the stairs. They both look out at the view.

MRS BOOTH

There. 'Tis a nice day for'ee.

He kisses her.

TURNER

Au revoir, madame.

She giggles. Turner leaves, immediately reappearing, going the other way.

TURNER

T'other way.

He disappears. A woman passes.

MRS BOOTH

Morning, Mrs. Stokes.

MRS STOKES

Morning.

...

Turner and Mrs Booth walk down some seaside steps in Margate. Suddenly, Turner collapses. Mrs Booth rushes to his rescue.

...

Turner is in bed in Mrs Booth's house. Dr Price is unbuttoning Turner's shirt, watched by Mrs Booth, who is standing at the end of the bed.

TURNER

Dr. Price, Mrs. Booth has summoned you here under false pretences.

MRS BOOTH

Shh! Let the doctor do his work.

DR PRICE

Breathe in.

Turner does so, and coughs.

DR PRICE

Breathe out.

Turner does so.

DR PRICE

Have you been exerting yourself unduly, Mr. Mallard?

TURNER

No more than is usual, sir.

DR PRICE

Remind me again, what is your profession?

TURNER

Master of Chancery.

DR PRICE

Breathe in.

Turner does so.

DR PRICE

Forgive me, sir, but I beg to differ. Breathe out.

Turner does so.

DR PRICE

I suggest that you are Mr. Turner, the illustrious painter, and I am greatly honoured to make your acquaintance.

TURNER

Hmm.

DR PRICE

My apologies to you both, but rest assured that my discretion can be relied upon.

As the doctor turns his back on them to attend to his bag, Turner and Mrs Booth exchange startled looks, and mouth words of consternation.

DR PRICE

Now, allow me to examine your eyes. The eyes of a master. Open wide.
(He inspects Turner's eye)
Hmm-mm. Look up. Hmm. Mr. Turner, you are suffering from a disorder of the heart. There is no immediate cause for concern, Mrs. Booth, but he will have to be careful.

MRS BOOTH

Oh, dear.

DR PRICE

Live moderately sir, and you shall enjoy a long and fruitful life. Exert yourself unduly and you will go to an early grave.

MRS BOOTH

Oh, dear. There, now.

TURNER

Hmm.

...

In Turner's house, Sarah Danby and Evelina stand in the drawing room. They are dressed in black. Hannah stands with them. Enter Turner. He joins them, hands clasped behind his back. They all remain standing. Pause.

SARAH DANBY

Good day, sir.

TURNER

Hmm.

SARAH DANBY

Have you nothing to say to me?

TURNER
I am most sorry for your loss.

EVELINA
Our loss, Father?

SARAH DANBY
Your own dear daughter's funeral.

EVELINA
Indeed.

TURNER
I did not find myself in the city.

SARAH DANBY
As ever, sir, painting your
ridiculous shipwrecks.

TURNER
Hmm.

SARAH DANBY
Have you no feelings? Speak!

Long pause.

SARAH DANBY
Come, Evelina, there is nothing
here for us.

Sarah sweeps out. She now has a walking stick, and is limping. Evelina accompanies her, followed by Hannah. Alone, Turner sobs.

...

A steamer glides through the sea. Turner stands at the stern, surveying the view.

...

Night. Mrs Booth and Turner are in her bed.

MRS BOOTH
You're tired, my dear.

TURNER
Hmm.

MRS BOOTH

'Tis too much of a strain for you these days, trawling back and forth on that old steamer every time you wants to see me. And even when they finish building that new railway, we none of us do know what lies ahead. I have bethought me of a plan, and here's what we must do. If you will find a little house for us, somewhere by your beloved River Thames, but not too far from London Town, with good solid wooden floors, nice bright light for you to work by... then I will buy the lease. I can sell this house. I think we would be happy. The two of us.

...

Sunset on the River Thames. The HMS Temeraire is being towed by a steam tug.

Turner, Stanfield and Roberts are in a small boat, being rowed by two men. The artists are swigging beer from stone bottles.

TURNER

There she is!

STANFIELD

The saucy 'Temeraire.'

TURNER

Going to her death, I fear.

ROBERTS

She's served her time.

STANFIELD

The auctioneer's hammer has struck that final blow.

TURNER

Indeed.

STANFIELD

If not for her, the 'Victory' might never again have seen our shores.

ROBERTS

Aye, nor the body of Lord Nelson.

TURNER
The little saviour of Trafalgar.

STANFIELD
They say five thousand oaks went
into making that ship.

ROBERTS
Now she's destined to be reduced to
five thousand tables and chairs.

TURNER
To be sat on by five thousand fat
arses.

Roberts, Stanfield and Turner laugh.

STANFIELD
Gentlemen, a toast. Raise your pot
of grog. To the fine, fighting
'Temeraire'!

They all raise their drinks.

TURNER
The 'Temeraire!'

ROBERTS
'Temeraire!'

TURNER
Here's to her.

They drink.

ROBERTS
A ghost of the past.

TURNER
No, Rabbie. The past is the past.
We're observing the future. Smoke.
Iron. Steam.....

STANFIELD
She'd make a fine subject for you
to paint, Turner.

TURNER
Oh, is that so, Stanny? I shall
cogitate upon it... Thank you.
Yeh, yeh...

The others laugh.

...

In his studio, Turner is working on 'The Fighting Temeraire'.
Hannah enters.

HANNAH
It's that Mr. Haydon.

Turner growls.

HANNAH
He's brought a cold blast of air in
with him.

She goes out. Turner continues working.

...

A few minutes later. Turner enters his drawing room, where
Haydon is waiting.

TURNER
Mr. Haydon. To what do I owe the
honour of your presence this
morning?

HAYDON
I trust that this is not an
inconvenience to you, Turner.

Turner growls.

HAYDON
Now, will you accept ten pounds?

TURNER
Ten pounds, sir?

HAYDON
I wish to be free of the debt. It
weighs heavily upon me.

TURNER
Sir, you owe me fifty pounds.

HAYDON
Manchester, Leeds, Newcastle. I
have been giving my lecture.
(MORE)

HAYDON (CONT'D)
 Edinburgh. Fair city. Only in
 London is my genius not
 appreciated. Consider this as a
 statement of intent.

TURNER
 Mr. Haydon: pray be seated.

HAYDON
 I had rather not. I do not wish to
 prevail upon your time more than is
 necessary.

TURNER
 And I prevail upon you, sir, to
 take a seat.

HAYDON
 Well, where would you have me sit?

TURNER
 Wherever you wish.

HAYDON
 Will this suffice?

TURNER
 Indeed. Mr. Haydon, do you still
 find yourself in a position of
 impecuniousness?

Haydon has sat down.

HAYDON
 Impecunuity. Turner, that has been
 my constant state these thirty
 years.

(Looking round)
 You are most well-appointed here. I
 do not recall the last time we had
 as much coal in our scuttle as
 that. I fear we shall be burning
 our furniture this winter.

TURNER
 Does Mrs. Haydon find herself
 faring well?

HAYDON
 She does not. She has not
 recovered. I fear that she may
 never do so.

TURNER
What ails her, sir?

HAYDON
We have buried five children.

TURNER
Indeed?

HAYDON
Paddington Old Churchyard. They remove the soil, extract the coffins, dig the hole deeper, then re-enter the coffins with another atop. Five times she has had to suffer that indignity.

TURNER
'Tis pitiable.

HAYDON
It is pitiable, Turner. You have never had to endure the loss of a child.

Pause.

TURNER
I have not, sir.

Hannah registers this. She is standing by the door.

HAYDON
A dying child, 'tis a potent subject for a painting, is it not? And what is your present endeavour, Turner?

TURNER
Marine piece.

HAYDON
A marine piece? Do not you tire of boats and the fiery firmament?

TURNER
I do not, sir.

HAYDON
(Laughing drily)
Sometimes I consider it might make a better course for me were I to set light to the house.

(MORE)

HAYDON (CONT'D)
 with my wife, my surviving children
 and myself within it. Then they
 would no longer be saddled with me.

TURNER
 Your pain is your own, sir. Do not
 inflict it upon your loved ones.

HAYDON
 Will you take my ten pounds?

TURNER
 I will not, sir. You are free of
 your debt.

HAYDON
 Free? How so?

TURNER
 'Tis expunged.

HAYDON
 Er - no, sir. I do not come here a
 seeker after charity or pity.

TURNER
 You have neither charity nor pity
 nor debt.

HAYDON:
 I do not wish it in such a
 circumstance.

TURNER
 Mr. Haydon, I am much preoccupied.
 Me damsel, be so kind as to escort
 the gentleman into the street.
 Good day to you, sir.

HAYDON
 This does not sit well with me,
 Turner.

Hannah shows Haydon out of the front door. He stumbles down
 the steps.

HAYDON
 Damn his eyes.

Hannah watches him go, then closes the door.

...

Turner and Jones arrive at a large, well-appointed house
Turner raps on the door with his umbrella.

In the hall of the house, which is the home of the Ruskins, a
FOOTMAN opens the door.

TURNER
Turner and Jones.

Ruskin's Father bustles into the hall to greet them.

RUSKIN'S FATHER
Mr. Turner. Captain Jones. It's a
pleasure to see you.

TURNER
Mr. Ruskin.

JONES
Good evening to you.

RUSKIN'S FATHER
I trust you had a pleasant journey?

TURNER
Indeed. You find yourself well,
sir?

Now there are two footmen. They take the guests' coats.

RUSKIN'S FATHER
I do indeed, thank you. Pride of
place, Mr. Turner.

He is referring to 'Slavers' which now hangs on the wall.
They all turn to look at it.

TURNER
Oh...

JONES
Ah, splendid.

RUSKIN'S FATHER
As though the house was built
around it.

Turner mutters politely.

RUSKIN'S FATHER
Please, come through. Come through.

They all proceed through a doorway. Turner gestures for Jones to go first.

TURNER

Jonesy.

...

In the Ruskin's drawing room. Turner, Jones, Roberts, Stanfield, John Ruskin and his father and MOTHER are all sitting in a formal circle.

RUSKIN'S MOTHER

My good husband is of the opinion that the gooseberry prefers the colder climate, whereas I consider that all fruits benefit from the warmth.

JONES

My dear late mother always insisted that both the gooseberry and the rhubarb favour the colder climes of our victorious isles.

RUSKIN'S FATHER

I do not doubt that the gooseberry for its preference may enjoy the warm. However, I am convinced that a cold start promotes the more vigorous specimen.

RUSKIN

Are we not to take as empirical evidence our many expeditions to the warmer climes of the Mediterranean, where we do not exactly encounter an abundance of gooseberries?

RUSKIN'S FATHER

(laughing)

Ha! Indeed.

ROBERTS

Exactly so. I did not myself savour many gooseberries in Jerusalem.

RUSKIN'S MOTHER

Ah, the Holy City, Mister Turner.

ROBERTS

And yet we do enjoy fine
gooseberries in Scotland, do we
not, Mr. Ruskin?

RUSKIN'S FATHER

Aye, and no better a cold start
than a good Scottish sun.

Stanfield and Roberts laugh.

ROBERTS

Exactly that.

STANFIELD

Surely regardless of how cold the
start of the life of the gooseberry
might be, it is almost certainly
destined for a warm ending.

JONES

To which we have all borne witness
in Mrs. Ruskin's excellent
gooseberry pie.

A general murmur of agreement.

RUSKIN'S MOTHER

I thank you, Captain Jones.

STANFIELD

Hear, hear.

RUSKIN

May I propose as a topic for
discussion the question as to the
depiction of the seas and the
oceans in pictorial art?

Turner groans.

RUSKIN

Now, I, I appreciate that I am
honoured to be in the presence of
two of our most distinguished
marine painters, Mr. Turner and Mr.
Stanfield. Not to forget er,
Captain Jones and Mr. Roberts of
course, whose, er, realisations are
confined to mere naked terra firma,
exemplary though they are.

TURNER

Hmm.

RUSKIN

Erm... My point being that, alas, I find myself harbouring a perhaps rather controversial opinion regarding the long deceased Claude.

JONES

Indeed?

RUSKIN

I am afraid so, Captain Jones. I must confess that I find his rendering of the sea rather insipid, dull and uninspiring.

STANFIELD

That is an extremely bold statement, young Mr. Ruskin.

RUSKIN

Thank you very much.

TURNER

Claude was a man of his time.

RUSKIN

My point exactly, Mr. Turner, but that time is now long past. When I experience a modern masterpiece such as yours, I am struck by the clarity with which you have captured the moment. Take for example, your 'Slave Ship: Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying - Typhoon Coming On', by which I have the good fortune to be greeted every morning on my way in to my meagre breakfast. The impact of the foaming brine incarnadine consuming those unfortunate Negro slaves never ceases to quicken the beat of my heart. Yet, when I gaze upon a work of Claude I find myself enduring nothing more than a mere collection of precise brushstrokes, which instil in me no sense of awe whatsoever, let alone the sea.

JONES

Preposterous! I do beg your pardon, Mrs. Ruskin.

Mrs Ruskin nods.

TURNER

Claude Lorrain was a genius.

JONES

Quite so.

RUSKIN

I sense an excess of modesty in Mr. Turner, and there is no need for such humility.

STANFIELD

Mr. Ruskin, sir: to conjecture upon the matter of seascape painting is one thing, but to stand amongst the elements and to experience and to interpret what one sees, that is something quite other.

JONES

Hear, hear.

ROBERTS

Quite.

RUSKIN

Well, that is as it may be.

TURNER

Claude painted from the land, looking at the sea becalmed by the harbour.

RUSKIN

Oh, indeed.

RUSKIN'S MOTHER

'Bless the Lord, oh my soul, who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters and walketh upon the wings of the wind.'

RUSKIN

How apt, Mother.

RUSKIN'S MOTHER

Thank you, John. When my son was but a small boy, he was overheard to remark that 'waves of sea are indeed lovely to watch but they are always 'coming or gone, never in any taken shape to be seen for a second.'

RUSKIN

(Joining in)

For a second.

(Laughs)

I find myself marvelling at my own wealth of perception even at the early age of four.

RUSKIN'S MOTHER

Quite so.

TURNER

Mr Ruskin, can I pose you a somewhat conundrous question?

RUSKIN

Ah, please do, Mr. Turner.

He gets up and proceeds to the window, where he stands expectantly.

TURNER

To which do you find yourself the more partial, a steak and kidney pie or a veal and ham pie?

The other artists laugh uproariously.

RUSKIN

I must confess, Mr. Turner, that I find myself quite unable to answer your question with the precision that I would wish.

...

Somewhere in the countryside, a railway train races past a fascinated Turner, the engine belching its steam high into the sky.

...

In his studio, Turner is painting 'Rain, Steam and Speed - The Great Western Railway'. Hannah enters and gives him a glass of sherry. Then she examines the painting for a few moments. A little baffled, she looks at Turner, then leaves.

...

At the Royal Academy, at the foot of the grand staircase, Sir Martin Archer Shee, the President, bows to the young QUEEN VICTORIA.

SHEE
Your Majesty.

The Queen and Shee ascend the stairs, followed by PRINCE ALBERT and a SMALL ENTOURAGE. A few minutes later, they are in the main gallery. The Queen and Prince Albert are inspecting paintings.

She stops by one canvas.

QUEEN VICTORIA:
Terribly flat. Dull.

PRINCE ALBERT
It's rather dark, isn't it?

QUEEN VICTORIA:
Hmm-mm.

PRINCE ALBERT
Sir Martin.

SHEE
Sir.

PRINCE ALBERT
Who is the artist?

SHEE
I believe, sir, it's... er...
erm...

Shee turns to Callcott and Eastlake behind him.

EASTLAKE
Er, Mr. John Ferneley.

Shee turns back to Albert.

SHEE
MR. John Ferneley, sir.

PRINCE ALBERT
Ah, Mr. Ferneley.

QUEEN VICTORIA:

Hmm. Ah.

Queen Victoria turns, spots a painting and reacts. She walks towards it.

She stops by it. It is one of Turner's paintings ('Whalers').

She shakes her head. Albert joins her.

QUEEN VICTORIA

Turner.

PRINCE ALBERT

He is clearly losing his eyesight

QUEEN VICTORIA

And this one is vile.

Victoria moves to the next Turner ('Sunrise with Sea Monsters').

PRINCE ALBERT

Ah, ungläublich.

QUEEN VICTORIA

Was ist das?

PRINCE ALBERT

Ich weiß' es nicht.

QUEEN VICTORIA

A dirty, yellow mess.

They move on, followed by their entourage. Turner is revealed in an adjacent doorway, having overheard the Queen and the Prince's conversation. Horrified, he leaves.

...

In another gallery somewhere, two middle-aged GENTLEMEN ART CRITICS are looking at Turner's work.

CRITIC

It is a truly frightful piece.

Another CRITIC joins them.

CRITIC 2

It is indicative of mental disease.

CRITIC

It is wretched and abortive.

The Third critic bursts out laughing. The others turn to him.

CRITIC 3

Sad.

Now two LADY CRITICS are looking at Turner's work.

LADY CRITIC

Mr. Turner seems to have taken leave of form altogether.

LADY CRITIC 2

Hmm.

LADY CRITIC

He has on former occasion chosen to paint with cream or chocolate, yolk of egg or currant jelly.

LADY CRITIC 2

(Laughing)

But here he uses his whole array of kitchen stuff.

LADY CRITIC

Eggs and spinach.

LADY CRITIC 2

No. Soap suds and whitewash.

They both laugh.

...

In a popular theatre, to the raucous delight of the audience, a music-hall sketch is being performed. A GROUP OF MEN AND WOMEN stand looking in the window of an art dealers. A BAKER'S BOY appears with a tray of jam tarts on his head.

BOY ACTOR

Jam tarts! Jam tarts!
Fresh jam tarts.

He goes over to the shop window. Much hubbub from the stage crowd.

Then the Baker's Boy accidentally spills the tarts over the painting on display, and runs off. The audience laughs.

Turner is standing at the back of the circle. He laughs too.

An actor playing the Art Dealer enters (ACTOR 1).

ACTOR 1

Where is that wretched baker's boy?

ACTOR 2

His fate, I fear, he won't enjoy.

ACTRESS 1

He will indeed the lad destroy!

ACTOR 1

Aha! I have an inspiration.

ACTOR 3

What's that?

ACTOR 4

We're filled with fascination.

ACTRESS 2

What is he doing?

ACTOR 2

And why is he doing it?

Actor 1 is doing something to the ruined painting.

ACTRESS

Whatever he's brewing, we'll soon be viewing it.

ACTOR 1

A masterpiece I here present,
which Mr. Turner has just sent.

The painting is now covered with broken jam tarts. The audience laugh uproariously. Turner is horrified. The group of actors recite in chorus.

ACTORS

While mostly blessed with good
intent,
we have our doubts.
But who's this gent?

A fashionably dressed elderly actor enters.

OLD ACTOR

Ye common throng and hoi polloi,
I am a rich and cultured boy.
My wealth derives from tricking
knaves,
and selling coffee, tea and slaves.
My house is full of things of
beauty
- paintings, sculpture and other
booty.
I like to drink and gourmandise.
But what is this that greets my
eyes?

He has spotted the ruined painting, now covered with the jam
tarts.

ACTOR 1

It is the latest thing in Art.

ACTRESS 1

It looks like bits of old jam tart!

Turner watches, grim faced.

ACTOR 1

'Tis Mr. Turner's latest piece,
which, placed above your
mantelpiece -

OLD ACTOR

Oh, cease your costermonger sounds!
I'll buy it. Here's a thousand
pounds.

He produces a wad of bank-notes with an elaborate gesture.
The audience boos.

ACTOR 1

Oh, sir. I thank you, in my humble
way.

OLD ACTOR

Don't grovel. Send it round today.

He exits.

ACTOR

I'll do so, sir, without delay.

ACTORS

Rejoice! Hurrah! Hip, hip,
hooray!

The Old Actor returns.

OLD ACTOR

Though ignorant of art and taste,
I'm filled with boundless glee,
for what's good enough for
Turner...
is good enough for me!

He exits, followed by all the other actors, except Actor 1, who goes into his shop. The audience cheers and whistles and claps. Turner leaves, much disturbed.

In the empty corridor of the theatre, a lone young usher stands briefly as Turner passes him on his way out of the theatre.

...

At a dinner party somewhere. Turner is sitting at a large table, amongst many FELLOW DINERS. He is very drunk. A BUTLER fills his glass, but Turner gestures to him to fill it more. Then he eats a desert very sloppily.

Indistinct, overlapping snippets of conversation can be heard from unseen and half-seen ladies and gentlemen. Some characters we have met can be discerned - Captain Jones and John Ruskin in particular.

Some snippets...

...design that my imagination could suggest and he promised to write a poem....

Very sage, Captain. Mr. Ruskin, I fail to see wherein lies the charity in misleading people as to the amount of talents they possess.

Well, talent is something that lies dormant and needs to be drawn out in the right circumstances.

Yes, if one has the opportunity to have it drawn out..

My wife, Effie; er... I am still waiting for her talents to arise and be drawn out.

I'm sure that talents can be crushed as much as they may be drawn out.

Ah, precisely.

Perhaps it is the duty of the husband to draw out any such talent.

... Plutarch who said, 'Painting is silent poetry...' Are you interested in poetry at all?

A young woman (RUSKIN'S WIFE) sitting next to Turner now smiles politely at him. He gestures to her.

TURNER

Sublime. Loneliness. Solitude.
'Ti... 'Tis not the same.

RUSKIN'S WIFE

Indeed not, Mr. Turner.

TURNER

It will come. Mrs. Ruskin, it will come. Love.

They share a moment.

...

Early morning. Turner is asleep, fully clothed on his old bed in his house. Hannah enters and puts down a cup of tea beside him. Then she leans over him and looks at him. He snores and turns onto his back. She opens the curtains. Turner wakes up.

TURNER

Oh... What is the hour?

HANNAH

Five-and-twenty to seven.

Turner mutters, sits up, and moves to the foot of the bed with great effort. Hannah brings him his tea.

TURNER

Thank you.

HANNAH

The sun's up, in all its glory.

TURNER

I must get on.

He takes a sip of tea, and gives her the cup and saucer. Then he puts on his shoes. Hannah lingers. He stands and starts putting on his coat. Hannah puts down the teacup and helps him on with his coat.

HANNAH

Don't you want your breakfast?

TURNER

No, thank you kindly. Are you faring well?

HANNAH

Yes. Thank you. And yourself?

Turner puts on his hat.

TURNER

Hmm. Yes, yes.

He picks up his bag.

HANNAH

Will I be seeing you tonight?

TURNER

Unlikely.

HANNAH

Tomorrow?

TURNER

No.

HANNAH

Oh. I might as well stop changing the bed sheets in here.

Pause.

TURNER

Hmm.

Turner leaves the room. Hannah sits on the bed, forlorn.

...

Outside Turner and Mrs Booth's new house in Chelsea. Lots of people pass to and fro. Some distance from the house, Turner sits sketching on a jetty. Mrs Booth comes out of the house with a broom. She calls to Turner.

MRS BOOTH

Mr. Booth!

Turner turns. They wave at each other. She goes indoors. Turner picks up a piece of bark, stands stiffly and walks towards the house.

Mrs Booth comes out again. She nods to a PASSING WOMAN.

MRS BOOTH

Good day to you.

Then, as Turner nears, she goes back into the house. Turner follows her.

MRS BOOTH

'Tis warmer now.

TURNER

Sultry day.

They are now both inside. She closes the front door.

MRS BOOTH

Here.

She takes Turner's hat off his head, and hangs it up. He shows her the bark.

MRS BOOTH

Oh, what d'you have there?

TURNER

Bit of drift bark.

MRS BOOTH

Ooh. Hmm.

TURNER

Has the look of a fallen angel.
Hmm.

MRS BOOTH
Pretty colours.

She takes the bark and puts it down. Then she helps him off with his coat.

TURNER
Sticky. Horrid parched.

They go through to the kitchen, where Turner sits at the table. Mrs Booth pours him a drink.

...

A busy London street. A sign announces that the shop that Turner now enters is a Daguerreotype Institution. He examines the shop window, and enters.

Inside, he is greeted by a young, fresh-faced man, CORNELIUS.

CORNELIUS
Good morning, sir.

TURNER
A very good day to you, sir.

CORNELIUS
Nice day, sir.

TURNER
Hmm-mm.

Turner looks at small daguerreotype portraits on the wall. The photographer, MAYALL, enters.

MAYALL
Ah! Good morning, sir.
Greetings and welcome.

TURNER
A hearty good morning to you, sir.

MAYALL
Now, you would be Mr...

CORNELIUS
Mr. Booth.

MAYALL

Ah, Booth, yes. Mr. Booth.
(laughs)

TURNER

At the appointed hour, I believe?

MAYALL

Indeed, sir. Mayall. John Mayall.

TURNER

I had made that assumption, sir.

MAYALL

(laughing)

At your service, Mr. Booth. Now, if
you would be so kind as to make
yourself comfortable...

TURNER

This is the contraption?

MAYALL

Indeed, sir. That is what we call
the camera.

TURNER

The camera?

MAYALL

Yes, sir.

TURNER

Not the cam-er-a.

MAYALL

Er... No, sir. The camera.

TURNER

The camera?

MAYALL

Yes, sir.

TURNER

As in 'camera obscura?'

MAYALL

Ah, precisely, sir. The camera.
Now, if I may ask you to take a
seat please, here...

TURNER

Name of manufacturer?

MAYALL

Er, it comes to us from the United States, sir.

TURNER

The name eludes you?

MAYALL

Er, no, sir...

TURNER

My name eludes me from time to time.

MAYALL

(laughing)

Indeed, sir? Now...

Turner hesitates, then climbs a few steps to a raised platform.

TURNER:

I denote from your brogue that you hail from the Americas.

MAYALL

From the fine city of Philadelphia, sir.

TURNER

Philadelphia. 'Tis on the eastern coast, is it not?

MAYALL

That is correct, sir.

TURNER

(sitting)

Ow! You shall have to forgive the whip crack of my knees.

(Mayall laughs)

Hat on or hat off?

MAYALL

Er, may I ask your profession, sir?

TURNER

Er... Master of Chancery.

MAYALL

Oh. A man of the law.

TURNER

Indeed.

MAYALL

Then I should recommend the hat on, sir.

TURNER

Hmm.

MAYALL

Now, if I might deploy this device...

He proceeds to place Turner's neck into a steadying clamp.

TURNER

Hey! What is this heinous implement?

MAYALL

Merely a gentle holding brace, sir.

TURNER

Puts me in mind of a surgical instrument. Does it hurt?

MAYALL

Not in the slightest, I assure you. So if I may...

TURNER

Hmm.

Mayall adjusts the brace.

MAYALL

Not too uncomfortable for you, Mr. Booth?

TURNER

Hmm.

MAYALL

Thank you, sir.

TURNER

What is the significance of the looking-glass?

A mirror on a stand is beside Turner. Mayall adjusts it.

MAYALL

It is to illuminate your good self, sir.

Light from the mirror falls on Turner's face.

TURNER
As the sun upon a lake.

MAYALL
Most droll, Mr Booth. Most droll.

He laughs and starts humming.

TURNER
What is concealed behind the small
brass cap? An optic?

MAYALL
Oh, yes, sir, a glass lens.

Mayall opens the cap, revealing the lens.

TURNER
As a telescope?

MAYALL
Not unlike a telescope, sir. Thank
you, Cornelius.

He takes a large drape from Cornelius.

TURNER
It is prismatic?

MAYALL
I fear not, sir. It is an
achromatic lens.

TURNER
Achromatic.

MAYALL
Now, let me peruse you.

Mayall puts the drape over his head.

TURNER
Why are you shrouded in the manner
of a condemned monk?

MAYALL
I am simply shutting out the light,
Mr. Booth. Ah, splendid, sir.

TURNER
The image you create is not of
colour. For why?

MAYALL

I am afraid that is a question we have yet to answer, sir. It is a mystery. Thank you, Cornelius.

He has taken off the drape, and has positioned himself behind the camera. Cornelius inserts the plate.

TURNER

And long may it remain so.

MAYALL

Now, if I may ask you to focus your gaze here on the flowers and we are almost ready. Thank you, Cornelius.

(hums)

Now, I will require your absolute stillness for the next ten seconds.

Turner holds the pose.

MAYALL

And we begin.

He takes off the lens cap, looks at his pocket watch, and for ten seconds hums the tune of the Chorus of Hebrew Slaves from Verdi's 'Nabucco'.

MAYALL

(laughing)

And there we have it.

TURNER

'Tis done?

MAYALL

It is finished, sir.

TURNER

I fear that I too am finished.

MAYALL

Oh, come, come, sir.

He laughs.

TURNER

Hmm.

...

In the Chelsea house, Mrs Booth examines the now mounted daguerreotype portrait of Turner.

MRS BOOTH
This be one of them there
photographs.

TURNER
Hmm.

MRS BOOTH
The Queen had one of these taken
with Prince Albert.

TURNER
Did she so?

MRS BOOTH
She did.

TURNER
Hmm.

MRS BOOTH
Oh, you do look most handsome.

TURNER
Hmm. 'Tis known as a
daguerreotype.

MRS BOOTH
Oh. Whatever next? Where'd you
have this done, then?

TURNER
Up in town, on the Strand. Fellow
with a box.

He adopts an exaggerated parody of his pose. They both
laugh.

TURNER
We're going there.

MRS BOOTH
Where?

TURNER
Have our likeness taken.

MRS BOOTH
When?

TURNER
Thursday.

MRS BOOTH
Oh.

TURNER
I've arranged an appointment.

MRS BOOTH
Well, you'll have to cancel it.

TURNER
'Tis painless.

MRS BOOTH
Well, I care not. You don't want my
old face in one of these.

TURNER
I do. The two of us together.
Forever.

MRS BOOTH
I... I do thank you for this. But I
ain't going.

...

In Mayall's shop, Turner and Mrs Booth are sitting side by side, posing for the camera. Mrs Booth is petrified. Throughout the scene, we look only at Turner and Mrs Booth.

TURNER
'Tis the camera. Mr. Mayall, may I
beg your indulgence with a
question?

MAYALL
Why, certainly, sir.

TURNER
Do you take landscapes with your
contraption?

MAYALL
I do, sir, from time to time.

TURNER
Hmm. Such as what?

MAYALL

Why, I have recorded the great falls of Niagara, sir.

TURNER

The Niagara Falls?

MAYALL

Indeed, sir.

TURNER

The greatest wonder in nature.

MAYALL

It was there that I was once able to capture a rainbow. Hmm.

TURNER

I'm green-eyed with envy. The Niagara Falls is a natural phenomenon that I have long desired to witness.

MAYALL

Is that so, sir?

(to both)

Now, madam, sir, if I may ask you to fix your gaze here upon these beautiful flowers. Thank you, Cornelius.

TURNER

The Niagara Falls. Soon painters will go about the world, with a box, like a tinker, instead of a portfolio under their arms.

MAYALL

Well, I'm... I'm sure they will, sir. I'm sure they will.

TURNER

Hmm.

(growls) (exhales)

MAYALL

Now, if you are comfortable, madam, sir, we may proceed.

They hold their poses. Mrs Booth is terrified.

...

In Turner's gallery, which is now very untidy. Strewn about the floor are buckets and bowls to catch drips. A large, wealthy-looking, middle-aged, WELL-DRESSED GENTLEMAN is inspecting paintings.

Hannah appears with a glass of sherry, which she gives him.

GILLOTT
Thank you, miss.

HANNAH
Thank you, sir.

She gives a drink to Turner, who is standing nearby.

TURNER
Hmm.

GILLOTT
Your good health, sir.

TURNER
And yours, Mr. Gillott.

They chink glasses and drink.

GILLOTT
Turner.

TURNER
Sir.

GILLOTT
I have a proposition to make.

TURNER
Ah.

GILLOTT
I like your pictures.

TURNER
Well, thank you, sir.

GILLOTT
My wife is especially partial to your companion pieces that grace our drawing room.

TURNER
Please convey my felicitations to your dear lady.

GILLOTT
I will, thank you.

He puts down his glass.

GILLOTT
And now I wish to show you one of
my pictures.

TURNER
Oh, indeed, sir? I am much
intrigued.

Gillott takes out a wad of money, and holds up a banknote.

TURNER
Five-pound note. Exceeding pretty.

GILLOTT
Quite so. For all of your
paintings, I will give you twenty
thousand of these. One hundred
thousand pounds. All your oils,
your watercolours, your drawings,
your sketchbooks, everything you've
ever produced. One hundred thousand
pounds. What do you say?

TURNER
Hmm.

GILLOTT
Turner, I am a man of wealth, a
self-made man. Throughout the
world, three quarters of everything
that is written is written with a
Gillott pen nib, one of my nibs.
I enjoy my wealth. Two things
delight me in my life: fashioning a
nib from steel, and making money,
and I like to spend my money on
things that give me pleasure. And
your pictures give me much
pleasure. I want them, all of them.

TURNER
Sir... with a modicum of regret
and somewhat of a heavy heart, I'm
sorry to say 'tis out of the
question.

GILLOTT
How so?

TURNER
They are bequeathed.

GILLOTT
Bequeathed? To whom?

TURNER
To the British nation, sir.

GILLOTT
And what will the British nation
pay you?

TURNER
Nothing.

GILLOTT
Nothing? Turner, I am offering you
a price you will never see again.

TURNER
Indeed, sir, by which I am much
humbled.

GILLOTT
Then accept my offer.

TURNER
I cannot, sir. I wish to see my
work, displayed in one place, all
together, viewed by the public -
gratis.

GILLOTT
Turner, this is perverse.

TURNER
Hmm. So be it.

GILLOTT
You cannot give your pictures away.
They're too valuable.

TURNER
Hmm.

GILLOTT
Oh, don't be a fool, man. See
sense.

Turner chuckles. Pause.

GILLOTT
I wish you good day, sir.

TURNER

I wish you good day, sir. Me
damsel, would you kindly show the
gentleman out?

She does so. Turner drinks his sherry.

...

In her Chelsea house, Mrs Booth is making the bed. She
fluffs up the pillows.

MRS BOOTH

(sings)

... Rouse about, towse about...

Downstairs in his new studio, Turner, with some difficulty,
is trying to put a canvas on the easel.

Upstairs, Mrs Booth continues to make the bed.

MRS BOOTH

(sings)

... rouse about...

She hears Turner shouting downstairs; then she hears him
fall. She hurries out, and rushes down the stairs to find
Turner lying on the studio floor, struggling with the canvas.

MRS BOOTH

Oh, there! Oh... oh, there.

She takes the canvas from Turner.

MRS BOOTH

Stay there. Stay there. Don't move.
Don't... Don't move.

TURNER

I... slipped.

Mrs Booth crouches by Turner.

MRS BOOTH

Oh, Lord. Oh, dear. All right.

TURNER

(breathing heavily and
clearing his throat)
It's passing.

MRS BOOTH

Here, stay there. Stay there. Oh,
my dear. Oh, there.

TURNER

No... It's passed. It's passed.
I've got to get on.

MRS BOOTH

Here. Here. Oh, no, no, no. Sit ye
down. Sit ye down.

She helps him up.

TURNER

Got to get... No, no, no, no. Got
to get on... Got to get on.

MRS BOOTH

No... No, you must sit down and
rest now.

Mrs Booth adjusts the easel.

TURNER

The canvas. The canvas is damaged.

MRS BOOTH

Oh, that's all right.
Sit down. Sit ye down. There.

Turner picks up the canvas.

TURNER

Now, bustle about. Bustle about...

MRS BOOTH

Oh, there... There be no helping
you!

She storms out.

...

In their Chelsea house, Turner and Mrs Booth are in Turner's studio. He is painting 'Norham Castle, Sunrise', whilst she is washing out his paintbrushes. Suddenly, Turner recites one of his own poems. He turns and performs it to Mrs Booth, pointing his brush at her.

TURNER

Be still, my dear Molly,
Dear Molly, be still.
No more urge that soft sigh to thy
will.
It is anxious each wish to fulfil,
But I prithee, dear Molly, be
still.

He points his brush at her. Amused, she continues cleaning brushes.

TURNER

By thy lips' quivering motion I
ween

She laughs. Turner advances towards her.

TURNER

To the centre of... where love lies
between.

She laughs.

TURNER

A passport to bliss is thy will,
Yet I prithee, dear Molly, be still

MRS BOOTH

(laughing, joining in)
Dear Molly, be still.

TURNER

By thy eyes when half-closed with
delight,
Yet so languishing turn from the
light.
With my kisses I'll hide 'em, I
will.....
Yet prithee, dear Molly, be still.

MRS BOOTH

(joining in)
Yet prithee, dear Molly, be still.

TURNER

By thy bosom so throbbing with
truth
Its short heavings to me speak
reproof
By the half-blushing mark on each
hill
Oh, my Molly, dear Molly, be still.

Mrs Booth continues to giggle and laugh. Turner fondles her breasts, from behind her. They both laugh.

He nestles his chin on her shoulder. Then his attention is caught by his painting, and he returns to it. Mrs Booth watches him, shakes her head and resumes cleaning his brushes.

...

At the Royal Academy. Varnishing Day again, but many years later. Turner examines three Pre-Raphaelite paintings, which are hanging together.

They are 'The Woodman's Daughter' by John Everett Millais, 'Mariana', also by Millais, and 'Chaucer at the Court of Edward III', by Ford Maddox Brown.

Turner is highly amused by these offerings, and chortles until he coughs.

...

In Turner's London house, which has now become extremely cluttered and untidy. Turner enters the hall, muttering to himself. He takes off his coat, and throws it on a table. Then he goes into his studio and picks up a canvas. He returns to the hall, puts down the canvas, then takes another coat from the coat-stand, puts it on, along with his hat, and picks up the canvas and his umbrella.

...

A busy day - people, horses, hustle and bustle. Turner, carrying the canvas, approaches his house. A WOMAN NEXT DOOR is selling drinks to two boys from a stall. Turner arrives at his house. He hesitates for a moment.

Mrs Booth is in the kitchen, polishing the silver at the table. Turner enters with the canvas.

MRS BOOTH

There.

Alarmed, she gets up.

MRS BOOTH
What ails thee?

TURNER
Hmm!

MRS BOOTH
Let me take your hat.

TURNER
Hmm.

She takes his hat.

MRS BOOTH
There.

TURNER
My sketchbook.

MRS BOOTH
Ooh.

Turner searches his pocket.

TURNER
It's not there.

MRS BOOTH
'Tis in your other pocket then?

He searches in another pocket.

TURNER
Hmm... No, it's not.

MRS BOOTH
Don't ye worry about it now. 'Twill
be somewhere.

She helps him off with his coat.

MRS BOOTH
We can look for it later.

TURNER
Where is the canvas?

MRS BOOTH
'Tis behind you, dear, on the
chair.

TURNER

Hmm? Hmm...
(laughs)

He picks up the canvas.

MRS BOOTH

You want I should take it upstairs?

TURNER

What?

MRS BOOTH

Your canvas.

TURNER

No. No, no, no, no....

He wanders off.

MRS BOOTH

I'll get you a drink.

Turner sits by the fire. He sighs.

MRS BOOTH

There.

She brings him a drink. She takes the canvas from him and puts it down.

MRS BOOTH

So... where have you been today?

She turns a chair towards him and sits down.

TURNER

Hmm... Hmm?

MRS BOOTH

Did you go back to Hyde Park?

TURNER

Hmm... Yeh, yeh...

MRS BOOTH

How be it all progressing?

TURNER

It's an engineering phenomenon.
Crystal pane upon crystal pane,
reaching up beyond the clouds.

MRS BOOTH

'Twill be a marvel to behold.

TURNER

It's a glass cathedral. It's the one... (GASPS) (CHOKES)

He suddenly gasps, and appears to choke.

MRS BOOTH

Oh, here.

She takes his drink and loosens his necktie. He struggles to breathe.

MRS BOOTH

Oh, there. Shh, shh...

...

Turner's house. Hannah arrives at the table on which Turner has thrown his coat. One of her cats is sitting on it.

HANNAH

So bad. Look at your messings.
Naughty pussy.

She shakes the cat off the coat. The cat has soiled it.

HANNAH

I don't know.

She feels something in the pocket. She takes it out. It's an envelope, out of which she slides a letter. Then she looks at the envelope more closely. It is addressed to Turner at his Chelsea address. She ponders this for a while.

...

Chelsea. Turner is in bed. He is very ill. Mrs Booth approaches with Dr Price.

MRS BOOTH

Now, dear, here be good Doctor Price for ye. He has come all the way from Margate.

TURNER

Dr. Price.

DR PRICE

Good morning, Turner.

MRS BOOTH

If there be anything you do need,
Doctor...

DR PRICE

Thank you, Mrs. Booth.

MRS BOOTH

I shall be downstairs.

She goes downstairs.

DR PRICE

Now, my dear Turner, how are you
feeling?

TURNER

Somewhat weakened, sir.

Dr Price takes his pulse.

DR PRICE

I'm so sorry. We all miss you in
Margate.

TURNER

Ah, Margate.

DR PRICE

Are you in pain?

TURNER

(touching his chest)
Here.

DR PRICE

Shortness of breath?

TURNER

Yes.

DR PRICE

Now, then...

He examines Turner's eyes.

TURNER

Did you come up on the railway?

DR PRICE

I did, and the truth is, I can never travel by train without recalling your miraculous painting.

Turner sighs. Dr Price sits on the bed. Pause. The doctor sighs again.

DR PRICE

My dear Turner, I am obliged to inform you that your condition is grave. Your days are numbered, and if you have affairs to attend to in this world you should do so now and prepare yourself for the next.

TURNER

Dr Price, with the utmost respect, may I suggest you take yourself downstairs to Mrs. Booth, avail yourself of a large glass of sherry, come back up here and reassess your opinion.

DR PRICE

No, sir, I'm afraid I shan't be doing that.

TURNER

So I'm to become a nonentity.

DR PRICE

I do not understand exactly what you mean by a nonentity.

Turner chuckles. Then his smile fades.

...

At the front door, Dr Price is leaving.

MRS BOOTH

Good day to you, Doctor.

DR PRICE

Good day, Mrs. Booth. Thank you.

She gives him his hat.

MRS BOOTH

I shall send out for the laudanum directly.

DR PRICE

Splendid. He couldn't be in better hands.

MRS BOOTH

I do my best. So, will you be taking the boat back from Chelsea Pier there?

DR PRICE

Indeed, I shall catch the midday train from Charing Cross.

MRS BOOTH

Well, I do wish'ee a safe journey, and I thank you, Doctor.

DR PRICE

I shall return shortly.

Dr Price puts on his hat and walks off. Mrs Booth surveys the scene, then goes in.

As Dr Price moves away, he passes two women, one of whom has her face largely covered by a cloth. We soon see that this is Hannah. She is with a YOUNGER WOMAN COMPANION. Outside the house next door to Turner's, the neighbour (the seller of drinks) and ANOTHER WOMAN watch Hannah and her friend as they pass.

Arriving at Turner's and Mrs Booth's house, they stop. Hannah has the envelope with her.

HANNAH

Number six.

She looks up at the house for a moment. Then she turns away.

HANNAH

I need a rest.

HANNAH'S FRIEND

Pardon?

HANNAH

I need a rest.

She moves away from the house, past the two Neighbours.

NEIGHBOUR
Can we help, my dear?

HANNAH
I'm looking for an old gentleman.

NEIGHBOUR
An old gentleman? Do you have a name?

NEIGHBOUR 2
There's a lot of old gentlemen round here.

HANNAH
He lives next door.

HANNAH'S FRIEND
Number six.

NEIGHBOUR
There is an old gentleman lives next door with his good lady wife. They say he has the sickness. Are you a relative?

HANNAH
N... No matter.

She starts to leave.

HANNAH'S FRIEND
Good day.

She follows Hannah.

NEIGHBOUR
Good day.

NEIGHBOUR 2
Good day.

The two women exchange looks.

...

Turner is in bed. He is staring, feverish, hallucinating.
Mrs Booth comforts him.

MRS BOOTH
Shh... shh, shh, shh, shh.

Turner pushes her off.

TURNER
(frightened)
Aaah!

MRS BOOTH
No, no, no. 'Tis I. There. Shh,
shh.'

She comforts him again.

...

Another day. Mrs Booth is looking out of the bedroom window.
Turner is in bed.

MRS BOOTH
Poor, wretched soul.

Turner throws back the covers.

MRS BOOTH
She be drowned dead.

TURNER
Hmm.

MRS BOOTH
There. The suffering she must have
seen. Hmm.

Turner gets out of bed and joins her at the window.

MRS BOOTH
If there be a God, he be a cruel
one.

Turner picks up a sketch book which is beside her.

MRS BOOTH
What are you doing?

TURNER
I have to sketch her.

He leaves the room.

MRS BOOTH
Get back into bed now, Joseph
Mallord William Turner!

He proceeds down the stairs.

MRS BOOTH
No, no, no, no, no, no. There be no
shoes on your feet!

She follows him.

...

Outside, a young woman lies on the river bank. She is dead - drowned. A POLICEMAN scuttles about. ANOTHER POLICEMAN crouches by the corpse. Turner arrives on the jetty, whilst Mrs Booth tries to put his coat around his shoulders. He starts to sketch the body, but he is weak. He mutters to himself. Mrs Booth tries to pull him away. He tries to resist. He is in pain.

MRS BOOTH
Oh, there. Let me take you in.

Turner mutters.

MRS BOOTH
There. No. Come in. You can finish
that later.

She helps him back towards the house. Neighbours have gathered round. They watch him go.

...

Turner is in bed, asleep. Mrs Booth sits at his bedside, looking towards the window. Dr Price sits on the other side of the bed.

Silence.

Turner surfaces a little. He groans. Mrs Booth turns to him.

TURNER
Me damsel.....

Mrs Booth smiles warmly at him.

TURNER
(clearly)
The Sun is God!

He laughs... And then he dies.

Dr Price gets up, and checks Turner's pulse. Mrs Booth buries her head in Turner's arm. The doctor gently closes Turner's eyes.

Silence. In the distance, the sound of a flock of geese.

Long pause.

...

Now, in silence, we see Turner sketching, silhouetted against an enormous setting sun.

...

Some time later. Mrs Booth is cleaning the window of her front door. She polishes vigorously for a while. Then she stops and reflects. Warm, tender memories, tinged with humour and sadness. She resumes her task.

...

And now, in Turner's old house, Hannah is ill and frail. She emerges from the gallery, muttering. Slowly, she shuffles into Turner's studio. She is weeping. A sad, lost soul.

SLOW FADE TO BLACKOUT.

...

NOTE

Hannah's skin disease (psoriasis), which is marginally evident in the early part of the film, gradually deteriorates over the years. By the end, it is palpably severe.