

FILM	ALBATROSS	
MOVIE SCENE	THE TRUTH	
SCENE LENGTH	05:15	
SCRIPT REVIEW	X x	
VIEW the SCENE	http://eslmoviescenes.blogspot.com.es/2012/05/albatross.html	
LANGUAGE	English	
LEVEL	Advanced.	

ALBATROSS. PLOT AND REVIEW

Emelia Conan Doyle is eager for anyone she meets to know that yes, she's related — so much so that she's quick to point out her connection to the *Sherlock Holmes* author the moment she introduces herself, before a new acquaintance might even think to wonder.

Anyone who spends even a few minutes talking to the rebellious 17-year-old would immediately be aware of her sharp wit. But the great-granddaughter of Conan Doyle (Jessica Brown Findlay) wants people to think she's possessed of a great literary mind as well — purely by virtue of her lineage. But with insecurities rooted in a rocky family history and a headstrong attitude that got her kicked out of school, even she's not quite convinced.

It's an inferiority complex that drives her to work at convincing people that cleverness is in her genetic makeup. Unfortunately *Albatross*, the first film from both director Niall MacCormick and writer Tamzin Rafn, suffers from a similarly overbearing desire to impress.

The title — complete, as Emelia would likely to be quick to point out, with pointed Coleridge citation — is a reference to how everyone in its small-town setting carries penitential burdens with them.

For Emelia, it's the years-ago suicide of her mother, as well as the pressure to live up to her family name. For Jonathan (Sebastian Koch), a local author who runs a beach-town bed and breakfast with his wife Joa (Julia Ormond), it's the massive success of the novel he wrote at the age of 22, which he hasn't been able to replicate in the 20 years since.

The way these people are dragged down by their own pasts would be enough to draw the connection to the title. But Rafn's script has not just one but three characters make explicit reference to the metaphor at different points in the story. No literary device is strong enough to withstand that kind of on-the-nose attention, and *Albatross* is filled with such moments — as when Emelia's new best friend, Beth (Felicity

<http://www.eslmoviescenes.blogspot.com/>

Jones), makes a visit to Oxford University, and the soundtrack chimes in dutifully with the Vampire Weekend song "Oxford Comma."

The lack of subtlety makes the story's familiar beats only more obvious, as MacCormick and Rafn contrive quirky circumstances to manipulate these four dysfunctional people into learning important life lessons. Beth is Jonathan and Joa's daughter, and she and Emelia strike up a friendship when Emilia gets a job as a maid at the B&B. The Oxford-bound Beth is as strait-laced and timid as Emelia is free-spirited and wild.

Joa immediately recognizes the new presence in the house as competition for the affections of both her husband and her daughter; Emelia, consistently savvy enough to see through everyone's facade but her own, is only too happy to cause trouble, quoting Aldous Huxley at the dinner table to impress the pretentious, self-important Jonathan, and encouraging Beth to cut loose with the occasional joint or drunken party.

If ever the plot is in need of a nudge, Beth also has a much younger sister running around, with that specific little-kid precociousness that exists in movies entirely so someone can say the darndest things at the darndest time.

It's a shame that the film comes across like an awkward and ingratiating teenager, given that the two performances at its core are so winning. Findlay and Jones are both playing well-worn coming-of-age archetypes here: the strong-but-damaged wild child desperate for some stability, and the geeky good-girl in need of loosening up.

But they both give more than is on the page, particularly Findlay (whom PBS audiences will recognize from *Downton Abbey*), who gives real depth to the brave face and wounded interior of Emelia. There's a measure of effortless grace in what these two actors do onscreen — even if Emelia, and the film, are always trying just a little too hard.

<http://www.npr.org/2012/01/12/145058030/in-albatross-cleverness-is-the-family-curse>

SCRIPT

EMELIA: Beth? Beth? Beth, I need to talk to you. Beth, I'm sorry. I didn't mean for it to happen, any of it, I just... I want us to be friends again.

BETH: We can't be friends, Emelia. You're a liar.

EMELIA: No, I'm not. You... you know everything now. You must know why I had to lie. I did a bad thing.

BETH: I'm not talking about that. Your name may not be Serena Molina, but it certainly isn't Conan Doyle either.

EMELIA: What?

BETH: Do you actually believe your name is Conan Doyle?

.....

(Emelia gets back to her grandfather's home)

EMELIA: Grandpa, can I ask you a question?

GRANDFATHER: Yeah.

EMELIA: Was my father the grandson of Arthur Conan Doyle?

GRANDFATHER: Well, his name was Doyle.

EMELIA: Was it Conan Doyle? Was he related to the author?

GRANDFATHER: Your mother did a lot of things for the right reasons... and a lot of things for the wrong reasons. Your father's name was Doyle. But... it wasn't Conan Doyle. Me and your granny felt it would have crushed you to take it away from you after your mum died. It seemed... another cruelty. We knew how much it meant to you.

EMELIA: This just means that the foundation that my life's built on is based on lies. My ambition to be a writer is based on a lie. I need to rewrite myself.

GRANDFATHER: But you can. You're a great writer anyway, without all that nonsense. You can't push everybody away, Emelia. Your mother Wanted you so much.

EMELIA: She can't have wanted me that much. She jumped off a bridge onto a main road.

GRANDFATHER: Millie, she was ill. Her mind wasn't right. But she'd be so proud of how clever you've made yourself. Because of him, without him, what does it matter? It's just a name, Emelia. It's just an albatross around your neck, really, but you just can't see that yet. You're still special, you know.

EMELIA: Special bloody needs, thanks to her.

GRANDFATHER: You'll stop being angry with her one day. And with yourself. You're a writer. But if you change your mind...and want to go to college instead, there's money, you know. I don't need anything but to upgrade my tea bags every once in a while.

EMELIA: Well, don't go bloody mad. I want some kind of inheritance.