

BAD ROMANCE

A LARP OF AMATEUR DRAMATICS AND AFFAIRS



Christian Jensen Romer



Dedicated to the Memory of
June Audrey Romer (1931 - 2020)

My wonderful mother

and

Sir Peter Hall (1931 - 2017)

Founder of the Royal Shakespeare Company

and

“Godfather of British Theatre”.



Swinton Village





Swinton Village

Key locations

The Village Hall

Centre of gravity for the game - site of the performance, rehearsals, vanishings, and most of the action.

The Primary School

Across the lane from the hall; its assembly room doubles as the dressing area when the cast overflows. During the day it's full of tiny chairs and suspicious children who've heard "the ghosts sing."

The Pond

Overhung by willows and rumoured to have "no bottom." Local legend says Marianne Davenham's reflection still appears there on moonlit nights. Ducks optional, gloom mandatory.

The Petrol Station

The nearest hint of civilisation: forecourt, flickering neon sign, a tired night attendant who's seen too much. Great for clandestine meetings and arguments over cigarette lighters.

The Bus Stop

The social nerve-ending of Swinton - where gossip, outsiders, and "strangers" first arrive. The bench still bears a plaque and faint scorch marks from the 1987 Bonfire Night disaster.

The Red Lion Pub

Half-timbered and half-cursed. Everyone goes there "for one drink" and ends up

oversharing. Lady Evelyn holds court in the snug; Maggie and Tony treat it as an extension of backstage.

Grimacre Wood

Dark, tangled, and full of folklore: phantom footsteps, lantern-lights, a ruined folly where teens dare each other to spend the night, derelict barn and some say rusted Victorian man-traps. Also, pheasants.

The Vicarage

Home to Alan Moreby and filled with boxes of forgotten parish files. The 1972 possession of Gladys Goatley occurred here, but no one in the village speaks of that matter nowadays. Alan is the lay minister as the Bishop of Barchester is distracted by a trollop from the Barseshire Chronicle, or so they say.

St Agatha's Church

A squat Norman building with crooked gravestones and a bell that occasionally tolls on its own. Organ music sometimes drifts out when the church is locked.

The Village Green

Open space between hall, church, and pub - host to fêtes, bonfires, and tragedy. The place Janine was last seen on Bonfire Night.



The Play Within a Play

Excerpts from the Swinton Village Players' premiere production of

William Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet*

During the evening, only five key scenes of the play are actually performed. (Normal gameplay continues offstage, and onstage characters will perform in a gazebo representing the stage).

Each is beautifully staged, precisely lit, and free of catastrophe.

(Players should not learn their characters lines. Their characters haven't yet! Also, scripts will be provided on the day. Use those over the actual texts of the play.)

Scene I – The Street Brawl (Act I, Scene I)

The play opens with a spectacular sword fight between the Montagues and Capulets. Steel flashes, tempers rise, and the Prince's decree restores uneasy peace.

Appearing: Tybalt, Benvolio, Romeo, Prince, Mercutio, Prince, Lady Capulet, Lord Montague.

Backstage/Technical Team: Assistant Director cueing fight choreography; The Owner monitoring safety from the wings.

Scene II – The Masquerade Ball (Act I, Scene V)

Music, masks, and candlelight. Romeo and Juliet meet for the first time in a dazzling dance sequence, as Tybalt seethes nearby and Paris hovers, hopeful.

Appearing: Romeo, Juliet, Tybalt, Lady Capulet, Paris, The Nurse, Benvolio

Backstage/Technical Team: Assistant Director handling lighting cues

Scene III – The Balcony (Act II, Scene II)

In the moonlit garden, Juliet appears above while Romeo whispers below. The poetry of youth and passion fills the air - a moment of pure stillness.

Appearing: Juliet, Romeo, The Nurse

Backstage/Technical Team: Assistant Director on prompt book; Friar Laurence (Dave Wetherall) supervising soundscape; The Owner (Lore Campbell) operating torchlight.

Scene IV – The Duel (Act III, Scene I)

A blistering midday confrontation. Mercutio's wit turns to rage, Tybalt's fury to blood. Romeo's vengeance seals the lovers' fate.

Appearing: Mercutio, Tybalt, Romeo, Benvolio, Servants, Townsfolk

Backstage/Technical Team: Assistant Director cueing fight sound; Lady Capulet managing props; The Owner on standby for injury cover.

Scene V – The Tomb (Act V, Scene III)

The tragic finale: the star-cross'd lovers die in one another's arms. The music fades, the lights dim, and Verona mourns its children.

Appearing: Romeo, Juliet, Friar Laurence, Paris, Prince

Backstage/Technical Team: Stage Manager running cues unless performing; Assistant Director or The Director as standby prompt; The Owner coordinating curtain call.



Casting Hints: Public Background

Notes for Cast

In this production, both **The Director** and **Lady Capulet** are listed as *understudies* for the leads. In the event of illness, fainting, artistic differences, or divine intervention, either may be required to take the stage.

The entire script (in two versions) of these five scenes is reproduced at the end of this document.

Tonight is opening night for the Swinton Village Players amateur performance of *Romeo & Juliet*, powered by Arts Council grant money and wild ambition. Three weeks ago the Director, Janine Davenham vanished inexplicably after the village bonfire. This has brought back memories of the strange disappearance of her sister Marianne who was director of the ill-fated last performance of *Romeo & Juliet* in Swinton Village Hall in 1997...

Miriam Davenham – The Director

Elegant, intense, and certain she knows what "proper theatre" looks like. Miriam is the late Marianne Davenham's older sister - a fact she neither hides nor dwells on, except when she does. She's stepped in to direct after Janine's mysterious disappearance and insists everything is *fine*, though she occasionally forgets which version of *Romeo & Juliet* they're performing. Think RSC discipline meets local-amateur dramatics chaos: a woman holding it together with sheer force of will and a perfectly sharpened HB pencil. Your niece is playing Juliet; your two sisters have now both vanished while working on *Romeo and Juliet*, and people whisper bad things happen in threes. You could be forgiven for being a trifle paranoid and stressed!

Angel – Arts Council Punk /Friar Laurence

Leather-jacketed, Bristol accent, early twenties with a "why am I here" attitude. Sent by the

Hippodrome's outreach scheme to bring "community outreach" and "professional attitude" to Swinton Village Players and already regretting it. Smart, sarcastic, perpetually clutching a clipboard or a half-empty coffee. Would rather be at Glastonbury than refereeing middle-aged drama queens but secretly wants the show to succeed. Think: *young arts administrator dropped into Midsomer Murders*. Works as usher/barperson/source of funding/owner of show.

Chloe Grice – The Assistant Director

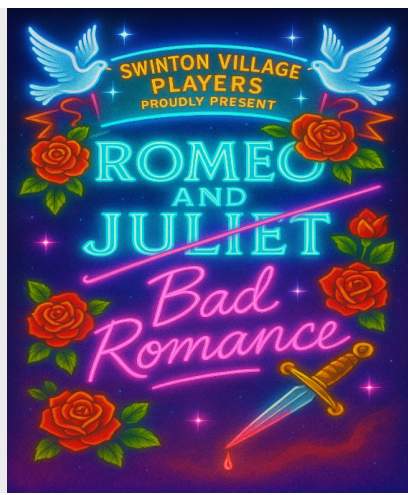
Bright, ambitious, and permanently over-caFFEinated, Chloe Grice was Janine's devoted assistant - and the only person who truly understood her "*bold, cinematic vision*." A lifelong Baz Luhrmann superfan, Chloe had planned a dazzling modern-dress *Romeo & Juliet* full of neon crosses, pop soundtracks, and slow-motion gunfights. When Janine vanished, Chloe assumed she'd be asked to take over. Instead, the committee handed control to Miriam Davenham, who insists on RSC authenticity.

Alex Barrow – The Stage Manager

Efficient, unflappable, and running entirely on black coffee and resentment, Alex Barrow is the one person standing between this production and total collapse. They know where every prop, costume, and body is buried - sometimes literally. A lifelong Swinton local, Alex has seen enough village drama to last several lifetimes and treats crises like stage cues: acknowledge, fix, move on. Everyone agrees that since their release from prison last year after serving six years for the unfortunate Halifax Building Society hold-up, they're "just like the old Alex again" - organized, punctual, and remarkably good with logistics under pressure.

Tommy Moreby – The Lighting Operator

Local electrician, lifelong geek, and accidental hero. Tommy Moreby joined the Swinton Village Players because someone told him there'd be free sandwiches and a chance to "test the new dimmer pack." Now he's



Casting Hints: Public Background

single-handedly responsible for keeping the entire production illuminated - and, possibly, for keeping the ghosts of 1997 in check. Think: Bruce Willis in *Die Hard* - if John McClane had been issued a headset, a soldering iron, and a PAT-testing certificate instead of a gun. Here only as a favour to Alex...

Lady Evelyn Barrow – Chair of the Village Hall Committee

Elegant, witty, and far too glamorous for Swinton, Lady Evelyn Barrow insists she's "simply doing her bit for the community"- which happens to involve running the Hall, chairing the Players, and knowing *exactly* where every skeleton in the parish is buried (some of which she dated). Once a minor society darling, she left the London stage under *mysterious circumstances* - a whispered scandal involving a peer, a python, and the closing night of *Noël Coward's Private Lives*. Now she presides over Swinton with gin in hand and an amused smile, mixing genuine charm with the faintest whiff of danger. People underestimate her because of her pearls and perfect diction; they shouldn't.

Rosie Grice – **Romeo**

Dazzling, impulsive, and utterly incapable of doing *anything* halfway, Rosie Grice is the living embodiment of "all in."The Grice–Davenham feud runs through her blood like cheap prosecco, but she wears it with defiant pride. When she loves, she *loves*; when she fights, it's headline news. Rosie genuinely believes the stage is her destiny - or at least the best available substitute for therapy. She treats *Romeo* as a method role, quoting Shakespeare in Tesco and practising death scenes on the bus. The townsfolk find her exhausting and irresistible in equal measure. Think: Fleabag doing Romeo in a cider advert,

pure heart and pure drama - a whirlwind of joy, danger, and lipstick-stained scripts. Her mother is Moira Grice.

Tony Culshaw – **Tybalt**

Fierce, dramatic, and gloriously extra, Tony Culshaw approaches *Tybalt* as a personal calling rather than a role. They move through rehearsals like a rock star trapped in a village-hall panto - dangerous, magnetic, and absolutely convinced this production could change British theatre forever. Their moods are legendary, but so is their loyalty - they'd fight to the death for their castmates... preferably in slow motion, under a strobe. Toni travels everywhere with a "*combat emotional support ferret*"called Balthasar, who allegedly "helps with line learning."No one's entirely sure if Balthasar exists or is just part of Tony's method.

Nora Culshaw – **The Nurse**

Loud, loyal, and impossible to ignore, Nora Culshaw has been part of the Swinton Village Players since the last century and still calls the props cupboard "*my domain*."To outsiders she's a harmless busybody; to insiders, she's the glue that keeps this shambolic troupe together. Nora has an irreverent sense of humour, a mischievous streak a mile wide, and an unshakeable belief that the show must go on - even if the ghosts have other plans. Eccentric, brave, and big-hearted. A cross between *Julie Walters in Educating Rita* and *Sigourney Weaver in Ghostbusters*, with a video camera in one hand and a custard cream in the other. Her son Tony is playing Tybalt.

Peter Barrow – **Paris**

Smooth, charming, and relentlessly reasonable, Peter Barrow is the man everyone in Swinton calls when something needs "sorting quietly."As Vice-Chair of the Village Hall Committee and heir to the



Casting Hints: Public Background

Barrow family's modest local empire (plumbing, roofing, and land ownership), he's built a reputation for being helpful, patient, and disarmingly self-effacing. He brings flowers when things go wrong, mends leaks personally and makes the occasional witty speech about "community spirit." He exemplifies the best in Swinton Village, and is handsome, posh and well liked as well as respected.

Moira Grice – Lady Capulet

Graceful, articulate, and just a little formidable, Moira Grice is the undisputed queen of Swinton society; or at least she would be, if the village had a society worth ruling. Once hailed as "a revelation" for her turn as Juliet in the 1997 *Romeo & Juliet*, Moira has never quite forgiven the world for moving on without her. The night the director, Janine Davenham, vanished, Moira's performance was cut short and her chance at stardom extinguished. Some say she was questioned by police only because she was too convincing when she rehearsed Juliet's death scene; she insists it was the worst humiliation of her life. Mention the Davenhams and her smile tightens just a little too much. The fact her daughter is playing Romeo has done little to make things better.

Sam Moreby – Benvolio

Bright, expressive, and walking a fine line between hope and collapse, Sam Moreby is the village's resident dreamer; and possibly its most tragic soul. They grew up in Swinton, left to "find themselves," and then somehow found themselves right back here, living above the old post office with a collection of dying houseplants and an unfinished screenplay

called *Ghostlight*. They're the one person who *feels* the strange energy in the hall: the flicker in the lights, the sudden chill near the trapdoor -- and they are convinced it's trying to tell them something. Sam is slowly unravelling in the most beautiful way imaginable. They quote Shakespeare, Bowie, and Tumblr with equal sincerity; they're impossible not to love and impossible to save. (Think Tilda Swinton in *Orlando*). Alan Moreby is your twin, and the same scandal shaped you.

Maggie Culshaw – Mercutio

A whirlwind in sequins and sarcasm, Maggie Culshaw is the village's answer to a West End diva who never quite made it past junction 12. The youngest of the Culshaw clan, she's inherited the family's wardrobe cupboard, its gossip archive, and absolutely none of its restraint. Maggie lives for the chaos of opening night: the frantic costume swaps, the whispered scandals, the thrill of stealing a scene just by breathing too loudly. She claims she "could have gone professional" if it weren't for the tragic combination of bad luck, worse men, and that pyrotechnics incident in 2012. Now she treats the Swinton Village Players as both therapy and stage - a place to perform her life as the melodrama it deserves to be. She was the driver on the bank robbery in 2018 that put Alex Barrow in prison, but the charges against Alex were dropped.

Juliet Davenham – Juliet

Beautiful, brittle, and born into tragedy, Juliet Davenham is the last of the cursed Davenhams - or so the village whispers. Her mother, Marianne, vanished during the 1997 production of *Romeo & Juliet*. Her aunt Janine, who raised her, disappeared three weeks ago on Bonfire Night. Now her surviving aunt Miriam insists "the show



Casting Hints: Public Background

must go on,"and Juliet finds herself cast in the very role that seems to haunt her bloodline. Juliet doesn't remember much of her mother, but sometimes she swears she catches her scent - lilac and cigarette smoke - in the wings. She dreams in stage directions, hears applause in empty rooms, and can't quite tell if she's becoming her mother or her character. The villagers call her "poor Juliet."They have no idea how dangerous she really is. She's graceful, magnetic, and utterly fearless on stage, but under the poise is a storm: a woman torn between playing the part and rewriting the ending. Maybe this performance is her chance to break the pattern - or maybe it's her turn to vanish.

Alan Moreby - The Prince

Rumpled, magnetic, and dangerously good company, Alan Moreby has a rakish charm. His father was the village vicar during the 1997 production and was widely rumoured to have been involved with the disappearance of Janine Davenham. He tried to follow in his father footsteps, but left theological college after what the diocese still refers to as "the incident in Winchester,"and has since reinvented himself as Swinton's unofficial moral adviser, gin connoisseur, and man about town. He is rumoured to have had affairs with half the women in the village, but the truth is unknown; he never kisses and tells. **Sam Moreby** is his twin.

What Is a Ghostlight?

When a theatre goes dark for the night, one light stays on: a single bare bulb, usually on a stand, glowing in the middle of the stage. This is the ghostlight.

Its practical job is simple — it stops people falling off the stage, tripping over scenery, or wandering into the orchestra pit when the rest of the building is pitch-black. But theatres have never been content with purely practical explanations. Actors swear the ghostlight also keeps the spirits of the place calm: former performers, stagehands, and assorted dramatic presences who apparently dislike working in total darkness.

Whether you believe the superstition or not, the ghostlight is a quiet promise that the theatre will wake again tomorrow, the curtain will rise, and the show will go on. It's the last light out and the first light in — a tiny beacon holding the stage until the audience returns.

Recent Events in Swinton Village

Events from 5 November (Bonfire Night) to 20 November (Opening Night)

(This is the common knowledge of Swinton Village.)

5 November – Bonfire Night

The annual village bonfire and fireworks display took place on the Green.

Weather: windy, wet, and smoky — typical for Swinton.

During the event: Janine Davenham, the director of this year's *Romeo & Juliet*, was seen moving between the hot-dog stand and bonfire area. Several cast and locals spoke to her shortly before she disappeared into the crowd and smoke. Janine did not return home. Her disappearance is still under police investigation, though no evidence of foul play has been found.

Local woman vanishes at firework display

Janine Davenham, aged 48, was last seen at the village display on the night of 5th December



The last known photo shows her eating a hot dog by the bonfire.

Search parties on the 6th and 7th found no trace.

With Janine missing, her sister Miriam Davenham stepped in as director. Chloe Grice, Assistant Director was notably upset at this.

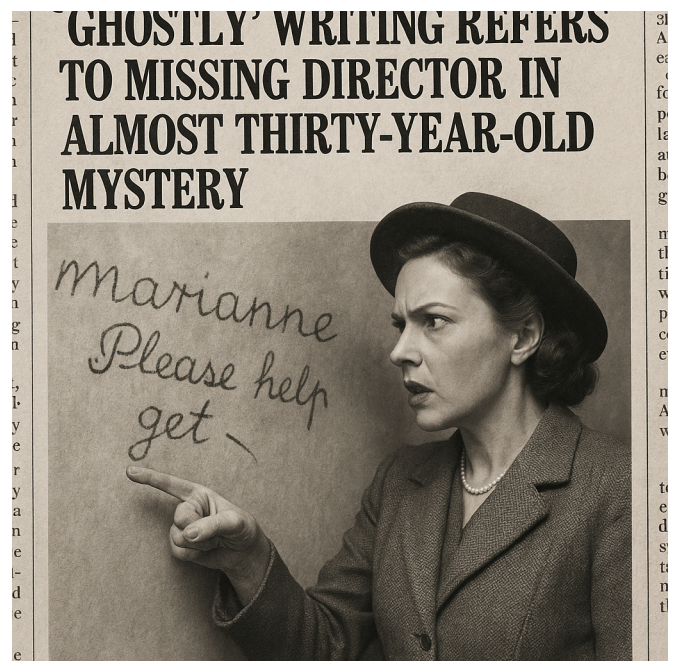
6–10 November – Rehearsals Resume

Rehearsals continued in the Village Hall with adjustments:

Some cast mentioned the ghostlight (the old safety lamp left burning on stage) flickering more than usual.

A handful of people reported footsteps after hours in the hall, a cold draft near the wings, or the fleeting impression of someone standing on stage. None of this was confirmed, and most assume nerves, stress, or tiredness.

Around this time, chalk messages such as “Marianne” and “Light candles” were found on backstage flats. These were cleaned off. No culprit identified.



11–14 November – Prop & Technical Oddities

A real dagger was discovered mixed in with the stage weapons. It was removed, logged, and replaced with the correct prop.

A few lighting malfunctions occurred, attributed to wiring and damp weather.

A couple of cast members claimed to see a woman in white moving in the hall when they thought they were alone. Again — nothing verified. Publicly, this was put down to flickering bulbs, shadows, and nerves before opening night.

15 November – Local Publicity

A reporter from the Swinton Gazette interviewed Lady Evelyn Barrow in the hall. This produced a striking photo of her with the dagger (“a misunderstanding”), a tone of mild sensationalism about “ghosts, glamour, and opening-night jitters.” and increased ticket sales and village gossip in equal measure.

LADY EVELYN DEFIES GHOST WITH BLADE OF TRUTH!

November 16th 2025



Evelyn found a real dagger on the props table after rehearsal, thought it was a replica, and waved it about during her interview with the Gazette.

Lady Evelyn Hackenschmidt, 26, sighted a ghost in tonight tonight from the stage in 1997 while producing *Romeo & Juliet* – and was never found.

The night's rut-remarked last scene on Tuesday, worns, a Lady Evelyn insisted 'ghosts can be beaten with courage and truth' 02m.

16–18 November – Heightened Tension

In the lead-up to dress rehearsals another minor backstage incident involved candles used by some cast members for “morale” or “atmosphere.” and the burning of sage “for luck”.

A script table was knocked over during a rehearsal when a door swung open unexpectedly.

Multiple performers reported sudden cold spots, and the sound of footsteps and someone humming in the hall's corridors, as well as a distinctive lilac perfume.

19 November – Dress Rehearsal

The final rehearsal was abandoned after the ghostlight flickered several times. during the balcony scene, a draft swept across the hall despite closed doors and a sinister chuckle was reportedly head in the auditorium.

20 November – GAME START (Opening Night)

The production of *Romeo & Juliet* is set to open.

General village mood is excited, heavily gossip-fuelled, and lightly on edge because of Janine's disappearance, and full of talk about “odd happenings” in the hall.

What everyone agrees on is Janine hasn't been found, and like her sister Marianne who vanished directing *Romeo and Juliet* in 1997 may never be, The hall feels... uncanny at times. And the ghostlight has been burning more fiercely than usual.

November 20, 1997

Woman vanishes at 'Romeo and Juliet' production

Marianne Davenham, aged 26, has disappeared while directing a local amateur theatrical production of *Romeo and Juliet* at Swinton Village Hall.



Theatre company members reported last seeing Marianne late in the evening on November 18th.

MISSONDUC
and his
dignity—

**FOR
TIME
GMS**



For the GMs: The TRUE STORY

IF YOU WISH TO PLAY THIS GAME DO NOT READ THIS SECTION OR ANY FURTHER!!!! THE GAME WILL BE RUINED FOR YOU IF YOU DO!

Bad Romance is a village-hall tragicomedy in which the Swinton Village Players attempt, against all common sense, to stage Romeo & Juliet while labouring under the long shadow of a disappearance no one has ever truly understood. In 1997, Marianne Davenham slipped out of the Village Hall during the final scene of the play and was never seen again, a mystery that the community gradually embroidered into a ghost story, a curse, and a murder mystery.

The truth, of course, is considerably more ridiculous and far sweeter: Marianne eloped that night with Bill Grice, aided by the mildly occult enthusiasms of the Reverend Theodore Moreby, who married them at midnight and then buried a protective charm by the church's north door. To avoid reigniting the old feud between the Davenhams and the Grices, Marianne and Bill vanished into a new life living in a caravan in Christchurch, leaving behind a myth the village has spent twenty-eight years interpreting with gusto and absolutely no accuracy. Only two people alive know what truly happened: Janine Davenham, who adopted Juliet for the child's own good, and Simon Grice, who removed himself to Canterbury and refuses to be drawn into village melodrama.

Now, in 2025, history seems eager to repeat itself. Janine, the director of this year's production, has gone missing under circumstances that look uncannily like those of 1997, and whispers of ghosts, curses, and unfinished business have once again filled Swinton's hedgerows. The cast, an entangled web of family loyalties, old friendships,

suppressed romances, and festering grudges, stumble through rehearsals while the ghostlight flickers ominously above them.

The real explanation is blessedly mundane: the electrics are dreadful, and the backstage circuitry has been patched and re-patched by generations of well-meaning amateurs. Yet the villagers, never ones to waste a good story, read every flicker as a sign and every cold draught as Marianne reaching out from beyond the veil.

Their confidence is not improved by the presence of a genuinely sharp dagger that looks, to the untrained eye, identical to the prop version. This blade, once Reverend Moreby's ceremonial athame, has drifted into the backstage clutter and periodically resurfaces in the hands of cast members who absolutely should not be trusted with anything sharper than a spoon.

The one actually guilty party in the present is Chloe Grice, Janine's assistant director, who has accidentally committed a crime of staggering incompetence. In a moment of panic and artistic frustration on Bonfire Night, she locked Janine in an old barn deep in the reputedly haunted Grimacre Wood, intending to talk things through, only to lose her nerve and flee.

She has spent the days since careening between guilt, denial, and an unwise infatuation with Angel, who remains serenely unaware of being the gravitational centre of Chloe's emotional collapse. Janine is still chained in the barn, kept alive with bottles of Liebfraumilch and Blue Nun and chicken sandwiches from the 24 hour garage shop. Unfortunately this and a selection of Women's magazines provided by Janine for



For the GMs: The TRUE STORY

her to read has left the unfortunate director almost insane.

Meanwhile, Juliet Davenham and Rosie Grice have embarked upon their own forbidden love story, unknowingly echoing the events of 1997 in ways that lend the entire production the air of an ominous recurrence. Their romance is the beating heart of the modern chaos, a mirror held up to the previous generation's secret happiness. Complicating matters further, Marianne herself has been unable to resist the pull of nostalgia and maternal pride. She has been driving up from Christchurch to watch her daughter Juliet's rehearsals in secret, using the hidden routes and half-forgotten passageways left behind from Bill's renovation work in 1996. When glimpsed, she wears a veil; when overheard, she retreats into the walls; and when she realised the villagers believed her to be a ghost, she found the entire situation so deliciously absurd that she began to lean into it. The chalk messages she leaves backstage, borrowed from the Marianne Foyster writings at Borley Rectory, are her affectionate attempt to "speak" without speaking, inadvertently fuelling the panic she means only to amuse. Her presence provides the GM with a subtle hand in the action, offering glimpses, hints, and atmosphere without ever dictating the players' choices.

Against this backdrop of misunderstandings, misdirection, and unspoken longing, the cast attempts to mount their production. Old wounds between Moira Grice and Miriam Davenham, once painfully close before pride and family loyalty prised them apart, surface in spectacular fashion. Alan Moreby carries the

childhood terror of believing he saw his father bury Marianne's body outside the north door of St Agatha's, a misunderstanding that has seeped through the decades like damp into the woodwork. Tommy battles the terrors of backstage electrics; Evelyn Barrow turns every rehearsal into an opportunity for theatrical self-promotion; and the rest of the company weave their own tangled strands of romance, rivalry, and dramatic overstatement.

As performance night approaches, the village's mythmaking intensifies. Some expect a haunting, others expect a tragedy, and a few — perhaps the wisest — expect nothing more dramatic than the usual Swinton debacle. Yet beneath the farce lies a genuine emotional truth: everyone in this hall, whether they admit it or not, is trying to protect someone they love, or someone they once loved, or someone they fear they may lose. The ghosts in *Bad Romance* are not supernatural forces but memories, longings, and secrets that refuse to stay buried. Whether Marianne chooses to reveal herself, whether Janine is freed, whether Juliet and Rosie triumph or crumble, and whether the village achieves catharsis or chaos, depends entirely on the players.

From a GM's perspective, your role is not to force any revelations but to maintain the atmosphere of escalating misunderstanding, keep the ghostlight flickering at the right moments, ensure the dagger drifts into inconvenient hands, and allow Marianne's veiled appearances to nudge, amuse, or destabilise the cast without ever dictating their choices. The game thrives on emotion, coincidence, and the joy of dramatic irony. Every character has the potential to reach a triumphant, disastrous, heartfelt, or absurd ending, and your task is simply to give them the space — and the occasional supernatural-looking nudge — to do so.

How to run The Game

If you are planning to run this game you have taken on a complex task, and I sincerely hope you can find at least two other referees to help you, though one will suffice if desperate!

The game is for 16 players: if someone doesn't show up on the night, or even several someones, I can't promise it will work exactly as planned but it's not going to ruin things if you just keep calm and make excuses as to where they are. If you have to drop characters, I'd start with Angel, then Mark Hades, which leaves the villagers without the outsiders, and while it will not be quite as good or chaotic it should still work.

Firstly, email each player the public knowledge section (pages 6 to 9 of this document) and ask them to list the characters they'd like to play. You might also want to use a casting form: the one I used in the first run is included at the end of this document. You can also if you wish email them the village map, and accompanying description, the Swinton Village Genealogy Club handout and the Recent Events in Swinton Village file. You might want to leave those until after casting, but they should be available to all players a week before the game,

CASTING

Casting people as the villagers is fun; you don't have to cast them in roles as this should be on their sheets. There is a form later in the pack called running order. This assumes an 8pm start, and a finish by 11.30pm - you may well have other plans, and it lists the roles you should cast in Romeo and Juliet; it gives you the times for the 5 scenes (here called "Acts" that will be played out on stage in the game, though most of the game will occur offstage and is far less rigid.

Angel, Alex and Sam are written as non-binary or ungendered characters. Gender them as the player desires, or not. Feel free to change the names and genders of any characters - if you only want hetero romances, make it so, or vice versa. If you need a copy you can edit, email me chrisjenseromer@hotmail.com for the files you need to edit them, I created this version in Affinity, and inexpensive layout programme, but I can probably make edits for you or provide easier to edit files. This pdf is designed to be printed with a printer capable of double sided printing if possible, and again the individual files are available ready for emailing out if you contact me on the address above,

VENUE

You need a room large enough for everyone to move around and talk freely. A classroom, a community centre, a village hall or even a small theatre will work, but so might your garage at a push! In the UK many pubs have function rooms available for free if you stage an event like this. If your venue does not have a stage you will want to designate one end of the room as the stage, preferably with an area the ghost can appear and disappear from that can be marked off limits to players.

Some areas of the village are also accessible in the game: if a player asks to go somewhere outside the village hall one of the GMs can take them out and follow the information in the **GMs Guide to the Village** (later) in refereeing their adventures 'offscreen'.

The most important revelations are if the Janine/Miriam script is examined, if someone goes to the



How to run The Game

barn and discovers the imprisoned Janine (and presumably releases her) and from various investigations and excavations around St. Agatha's church. There are other places which might be investigated though - the pub, the 24 hour garage, the village green with Godfrey the Goose and the bus stop in my first run were all visited.

SET UP and SAFETY

Send the characters out with a week before the game if possible, along with all the aforementioned documents.

The actual game begins with a safety briefing (google "larp safety" or "cut and brake + LARP", or "LARP + safewords" for advice on this. At a minimum make sure everyone knows where the fire exits are, that there should be no contact of any nature without agreeing it first, and that its fine to drop out of the game to check someone else is OK. Fight scenes in particular should not use real weapons, and kissing or grabbing another player without their enthusiastic prior consent is a clear NO!

We provided some lights (a torch as a spot is a fair minimum) for Tommy to do lighting with. You might also want something you can play music through, such as a wifi speaker. Players might bring their own.

Finally you need a large village noticeboard. We bought a corkboard and used pins, but cardboard and sellotape or bluetak on paper can also work. Print out the Noticeboard props at the end of the document before the scripts, and attach them with the map of the village and accompanying description to the Village

Notice Board. This is an in game prop throughout the game in the foyer of the village hall that players can wander over to and read articles from, or examine, and plot around.

You should print out each character and relevant material for that character and place them in an A4 envelope clearly labelled with both the players and characters name. Don't seal it just yet; there is more printing to do first!

THE SCRIPTS

Print out one set of the Shakespeare scripts for Acts 1 to 5. Put them all in Miriam's envelope. Then print all Chloe's versions, and put them in her envelope.

Next print 7 copies of Shakespeare version Acts 1 to 5, and 6 copies of Chloe's versions of the Acts. Remove Mark Hades from the pile: he does not need scripts.

This leaves you with 13 characters. Put one or the other version of each Act at random in each envelope. This random allocation will cause your run of the game to be different to mine: no matter. The players will have to decide which version they are going to stage.

SPACES

Once the game begins, the game area represents backstage at the Village Hall; except for three designated areas - the Stage which contains the Ghostlight, the Foyer which contains the Noticeboard, and the Auditorium which contains a row of chairs for anyone watching from the audience (three will do, smallest area counter-intuitively - it represents a much larger space.

Swinton Village

For the GM's ONLY

The game takes place in the Village Hall. However, characters may well wish to leave and investigate clues or pursue leads outside of the theatre area. Let them! A GM should be prepared with these notes to play out the scene just outside the play space, in one to one roleplay style. The GM describes the situation, the player describes their characters actions. The GM should improvise as necessary however.

The Village Hall

The game space represents this.

The Primary School

Across the lane from the hall; its assembly room doubles as the dressing area when the cast overflows. *Empty at night; only plays a role if a player breaks in for some reason?*

The Pond

Overhung by willows and rumoured to have "no bottom." Local legend says Marianne Davenham's reflection still appears there on moonlit nights. Ducks optional, gloom mandatory.

GM's should remember this is guarded by Godfrey the Goose and his darling Jemimah. Feel free to improvise encounters.

The Petrol Station

The nearest hint of civilisation: forecourt,

flickering neon sign, a tired night attendant who's seen too much. Great for clandestine meetings and arguments over cigarette lighters. *If asked about weird stuff*

Daphne who works nights knows Chloe comes over every night to buy a bottle of water, two bottles of cheap wine and two packs of slightly stale sandwiches. She has been doing this every night since Bonfire Night and Daphne is amazed her complexion isn't ruined. She might ramble on about lots of irrelevant stuff to, depending on how the GM playing her feels.

The Bus Stop

The social nerve-ending of Swinton - where gossip, outsiders, and "strangers" first arrive. The bench still bears a plaque and faint scorch marks from the 1987 Bonfire Night disaster.

The tarmac here is cracked; if tools are found (anyone might have something suitable in their garden shed?) and it is dug up, there is no corpse under there,

The Red Lion Pub

Half-timbered and half-cursed. Everyone goes there "for one drink" and ends up oversharing. Lady Evelyn holds court in the snug; Maggie and Tony treat it as an



Swinton Village For the GM's ONLY

extension of backstage.

It sells alcohol take outs from the off licence hatch, jars of cockles, pickled eggs, peanuts and crisps. Len the barman is happy to gossip but knows nothing relevant. Just improvise village gossip about people otherwise never referred to in this game.

Grimacre Wood

Dark, tangled, and full of folklore: phantom footsteps, lantern-lights, a ruined folly where teens dare each other to spend the night, derelict barn and some say rusted Victorian man-traps. Also, pheasants.

This bit is great fun. Mention it's spooky atmosphere, the weird mists, the impression of being watched from the trees, the darkness closing in. Try and scare as many players as possible in to running back to the safety of the Village Hall. (We managed three!) If you walk in after a short while the sound of unearthly groaning, clanking of chains and gurgling plus weird knocking sounds fill the air. If they still don't run, they find the barn!

The Vicarage

Home to Alan Moreby and his father before him and filled with boxes of forgotten parish files. The 1972 possession of Gladys Goatley occurred

here, but no one in the village speaks of that matter nowadays. Alan is the lay minister as the Bishop of Barchester is distracted by a trollop from the Barsetshire Chronicle, or so they say.

Apart from the terrible Trollope joke and Theo Moreby's notebooks of vague occult speculations and incantations, none of any real esoteric value, there is nothing relevant here. Anyone with a knowledge of the occult could tell theo just liked being mysterious and had read *Bluff your Way in the Occult*. No one in the village has that knowledge though.

St Agatha's Church

A squat Norman building with crooked gravestones and a bell that occasionally tolls on its own. Organ music sometimes drifts out when the church is locked.

*The Church is dark and spooky at night. There may or may not be a hidden crypt **under the altar**, but it takes four people five minutes to move the great altar stone, so its going to be a major issue if half the cast run off to do it for the play!*

***The Church Register** however can be found in the locked vestry and if anyone thinks to examine the date of the 1997 production they will find the Reverend has entered correctly "The marriage of Bill Grice and Juliet Davenham of this parish, by Special Licence of the Bishop of Barchester."*

Swinton Village

For the GM's ONLY

Outside the North door of the Church (“the Devil’s entrance in folklore) is a bare patch of ground where the grass never grows. This is where Bill Grice used to take a pee on his way home from the Red Lion; but it also if dug contains something plot relevant. A wooden box contains poppets of Bill Grice and Marianne Davenham, bound together with red thread, and their hairs. The initials BG & MD are inscribed on a small red card heart in gold gel pen in the Rev. Theo’s handwriting.

The Village Green

Open space between hall, church, and pub - host to fêtes, bonfires, and tragedy. The place Janine was last seen on Bonfire Night. See Village Pond

The Barn

Assuming anyone is brave enough to persist in to the woods and seek out the source of the ghostly wailing, gurgling, clanking and banging, they will discover the Old Barn, a place which has its own fair share of spooky folklore. It’s said to be haunted by Old Ned the Highwayman, who was gibbeted close by at Hangman’s Oak.

The Barn is locked with a brand new padlock. Janine is semi-conscious inside, almost finished off by two weeks of bad wine and

worse women’s magazines Chloe stole from a dentist’s Waiting Room. Assuming the player breaks the lock or gives a convincing explanation of how they get in, they will be astonished to discover Janine slumped on a chair, bound by a chain to a pillar and surrounded by empty wine bottles, discarded chicken sandwich packets and copies of Women’s Weekly!

If it’s ACT 4 already, Janine can reveal she was abducted and is being held prisoner by Chloe so she can stage her play. If its earlier, she is too drunk and insensible to say much: either way she will need to be taken directly to Barchester Royal Hospital. She can telephone and reveal Chloe’s involvement from her hospital bed in Act 5.



THE CAST

Miriam Davenham

Elegant, driven, and very nearly indestructible, Miriam Davenham has taken over directing *Romeo & Juliet* after the disappearance of her sister Janine Davenham three weeks ago.

Everyone in Swinton agrees she's the only person who could keep the show from collapsing - and perhaps the only Davenham left who dares.

🔥 Family Background

Miriam is the youngest of the three Davenham sisters:

Marianne Davenham – the glamorous eldest, who vanished in 1997 during her own production of *Romeo & Juliet*.

Police said she "probably ran off with a man." The gossip in Swinton says the Grice brothers, Simon and Bill, murdered her and "fed her to the pigs on the Culshaw farm."

No one proved it, but the rumour stuck.

Janine Davenham (née Davenham) – the sensible one. She raised Marianne's orphaned daughter Juliet as her own and grew into a respected local director. Until Bonfire Night.

Juliet Davenham (Vikki Sterling) – Janine's daughter and Miriam's niece, now playing Juliet in the current production. The child of tragedy, poor girl.

💔 Janine's Disappearance

It happened three weeks ago on Bonfire Night.

Miriam remembers it clearly - the wind, the rain, the smell of fireworks and fried onions.

She and Janine stood together on the village green watching the fireworks.

Janine said she wanted to "have a quick word with Nora by the hot-dog stand."

Miriam turned away for a moment to answer her phone - and when she looked back, Janine had gone. That was the last time she saw her. The police say she probably ran off with someone..

Miriam knows better: in this family, people don't just leave.

✂️ The Old Feud

The Davenhams and the Grices have been at each others throats for more than two centuries.

It began in 1798, when a Grice short-changed a Davenham over a round of ale at the Red Lion. Every few months, it flares up again - usually over money, love, or theatre.

The 1997 tragedy sealed it: the Grice boys murdered Marianne during a performance of *Romeo and Juliet*, and buried her under the tarmac of the new bus stop. The police did nothing!

Miriam has never forgiven them.

She sees the feud not as superstition but as pattern:

Whenever a Grice joins a Davenham production, something burns, floods, or disappears.

👊 Her Opinions

Chloe Grice – Janine's former assistant. Speaks of "modernising Shakespeare" with neon lights and pop songs - a sacrilege Miriam calls "attempted murder of the Bard." Completely insubordinate and a typical Grice bitch.

Rosie Grice – playing *Romeo*. Brilliant, reckless, untrained, and therefore doomed. If she wasn't a Grice you'd like the girl, but she is and therefore beyond hope.

Moira Grice – Rosie's mother, the grande dame of bad taste and the bitch queen of Swinton Village. Your mortal enemy, and utterly talentless too.



Miriam Davenham

Nora Culshaw – kind, well-meaning, far too interested in ghosts and sausages.

Lady Evelyn Barrow – drinks gin, meddles, and calls it culture. She's the closest thing to a friend you have, apart from dear Peter...

Peter Barrow – the only man who still listens when she says "five-minute hold." Reliable, and oh so sweet. What could have been! He married Philomena Grice, a horrible trollop.

The Nostalgic Non-Affair

In the late 1980s, before the Davenham tragedies began, Miriam and Peter Barrow were the comic leads in a village panto.

They shared fish-paste sandwiches, flirted during set-painting, and nearly kissed under the mistletoe before her mother interrupted with the immortal line: "Miriam, you'll ruin your diction."

Life pulled them apart - she pursued respectability, he married a Grice - but the spark never quite died.

Now:

Thirty years later, Peter's back as Stage Manager, still dependable, still a little shy. He brings her tea when she forgets to eat and roses "for luck." Miriam insists it's pity. Secretly, she keeps the dried petals in her prompt book.

Why Miriam's Drawn to Him:

He listens without interrupting - almost unheard of in Swinton.

He believes in theatre as service, not ego.

He's the only one who doesn't mention ghosts or glitter.

He smells faintly of varnish and respectability - and she misses both.

Her Obstacle:

22 Davenhams don't do happiness.

Every romantic Davenham ends in scandal, rumour, or missing-person report.

She's terrified affection might be contagious - that to love again is to vanish.

What She Tells Herself:

"He's only being kind. A gentleman gesture. One mustn't confuse civility with sentiment."

Miriam on the other's "Romantic Entanglements"

Miriam has been watching, and knows far more about the cast's love lives that she wants to

1. Juliet & Rosie – "The Star-Cross'd Rehearsal Romance"

Sheer madness. Miriam's niece entangled with a Grice is history mocking her. She calls it "method acting gone septic." She pretends it's only stage chemistry, but she's already planned a rota to keep them separated at tea breaks.

2. Alan & Moira – "The Gin-Soaked Almost-Affair"

Utterly improper. Alan should know better, and Moira Grice has never met a moral boundary she couldn't step over in heels. Miriam worries it will end with a scandal in The Barchester Gazette - or another ghost.

3. Angel & Chloe – "The Muse and the Misread"

A fluorescent nightmare. Miriam considers Angel talented but easily distracted and Chloe a walking glitter bomb. Their "creative chemistry" has cost her three lighting cues and one near-death by glitter inhalation.

5. Lady Evelyn & Tommy – "The May-December Flirtation"

She calls it "entirely unsuitable." He calls her "ma'am." Miriam calls for a stage-management meeting whenever they so much as share a gin. Still, she grudgingly admits the lights have never

Miriam Davenham

looked better.

6.. Benvolio & Romeo – "The Wistful Side-Triangle"

At least someone's keeping to the text. Miriam finds it touching but distracting: "If he weeps on cue, fine. If he weeps off-cue, we'll need mops." She's already drafted an appendix on "emotional containment" for next year's handbook.

Overall View "If they all spent half as much passion on rehearsal as they do on each other, we might have a tragedy worth performing instead of merely living through."



The Ghostlight and the Ghost

Ever since Janine vanished, Miriam has kept the ghostlight burning - a single bulb left on after rehearsals to appease the theatre spirits.

Lately it's begun to flicker, and strange things keep happening:

Chalked words on the flats: "Marianne. Prayers. Light candles."

Footsteps on the empty stage.

A pale woman, veiled and barefoot, glimpsed near the wings.

Miriam tells everyone it's nonsense but secretly fears Janine's spirit is angry - or trying to warn her. She's begun to whisper good-night to the lamp before she leaves.



MIRIAM DAVENHAM – CHARACTER POWERS



Green Power – "Director's Cut" (Use: whenever she wishes)

Once a scene:

At any time, Miriam may call "Hold!" and briefly step into her director persona, freezing the scene for up to 10 seconds of real time.

During this freeze she may:

Rearrange one or two characters ("You two – swap places!"),

Adjust a prop or light ("No, no, the dagger should glint!"), or

Deliver a single "note" line in-character ("Once more, with feeling!").

When the freeze ends, play continues naturally - other players react as if it never happened, or as though it was simply "Miriam being Miriam."



Amber Power – "The Ghostlight Burns" (Use: once per game)

Effect: Once per scene, Miriam may invoke the superstition of the ghostlight by whispering "Let the light hold steady."

For the remainder of this scene: Any mention of ghosts, disappearances, or the Davenham family must be spoken softly or avoided entirely (a hush falls).



Red Power – "Respect My Authority" (Use: once in Act V only)

Effect: All stage lights and attention momentarily focus on her - she becomes the emotional centre of the scene. She speaks out loud, and everyone must stop and listen, then one by one say out loud what they were silently thinking as she spoke, revealing some truth about themselves.



Chloe Grice

Bright, ambitious, and permanently over-caffeinated, Chloe Grice was Janine's devoted assistant - and the only person who truly understood her "*bold, cinematic vision*." A lifelong Baz Luhrmann superfan, Chloe had planned a dazzling modern-dress *Romeo & Juliet* full of neon crosses, pop soundtracks, and slow-motion gunfights. When Janine vanished, Chloe assumed she'd be asked to take over. Instead, the committee handed control to Miriam Davenham, who insists on RSC authenticity.

Secrets

Three weeks ago, after yet another argument about "tone" and "budget," Chloe snapped. After yet another blazing row about budgets and "creative vision," at the bonfire on the Village Green Janine stormed off into Grimacre Wood muttering she'd "rather rehearse with trees than with Chloe."

Chloe took this literally. She followed her to Grimacre Wood to "continue the discussion constructively." Janine slipped on the muddy path outside the Old Barn, banged her knee, and started yelling. In a panic, Chloe helped her inside "for safety," then locked the door "just to stop her storming off again before we've reached understanding."

Realising what she'd done, Chloe spiralled into justification: "This isn't abduction-it's a creative retreat!" So she kidnapped Janine the director and locked her in the Old Barn in Grimacre Wood, convincing herself it was "protective custody" until Janine "saw sense" and agreed to the new creative direction. Art demands it!

She's been sneaking out nightly to take her:

petrol-station sandwiches,

a bottle of cheap plonk, and

the latest issue of Woman's Weekly or similar.

Janine is still alive, chained to a post and extremely cross, and will have to be released after the show - and worse her sister Miriam has taken on the role of director! You have the loyalty of the cast though, who love your vision, and will definitely go with it rather than Miriam's - you hope. Tonight is opening night! There is no time to kidnap Miriam as well?

⚡ Motivations

Get her vision realised: Chloe still wants her glittering Luhrmann-style dream on stage.

Keep Janine hidden until after opening night.

Earn Angel's affection: she is so hot!

Cover up the "prop incident" before anyone connects her to it.

Get rid of Miriam if that's what it takes

🔪 The "Real Dagger"

During a late props audit, Chloe discovered the plastic dagger was cracked. She borrowed Alan Moreby's antique stage knife from the church hall cupboard to "check the look." It got mixed up on the table - and no one knows she was the one who brought the real blade in. When the truth emerges, try to hide the weapon, and put suspicion on the others.

👻 Connection to the "Ghostlight"

Chloe thinks all this ghost nonsense is excellent publicity but secretly terrifying. Peter blames her "modern lighting rig" for every electrical fault.

Chloe Grice

She suspects Miriam planted the chalk messages to stir sympathy.

Her nightly trips to feed Janine mean she's been seen around the hall after dark, veiled in her rain-poncho - leading to the first "ghost"sightings.

♥ Romantic Entanglement

Angel is Chloe's creative muse and crush.

Complication: Chloe's desperation makes her blurt half-truths ("I've got Janine somewhere safe... I mean, spiritually!").

Gesture: She leaves Angel glitter-hearts and coffee cups with Sharpie quotes from Shakespeare and Taylor Swift.

History

The Davenhams and Grices have been at war-socially, theatrically, and in every way - for a century. It got worse since the 1997 Romeo & Juliet fiasco. The legend goes that Marianne Davenham (Miriam's sister) disappeared and everyone believes Bill Grice (or Simon Grice murdered her), bringing "shame"on both families.

It's said that Marianne Davenham's body lies beneath the concrete of the new Swinton Village Bus Stop by the petrol station, poured the very week she vanished. Every winter, frost cracks the tarmac - "because she's trying to get out."

Miriam was there. Chloe's mum says Miriam "ran the show and ruined everything,"and that her family "made Bill Grice the scapegoat."So Chloe grew up believing the Davenhams used their wealth and connections to destroy her uncle's reputation. Uncle Bill went to Florida and never returned; Uncle Simon moved to Canterbury and lived with Stephen Gately of Boyzone briefly, before buying a black Landrover and becoming an estate agent.

Miriam's reputation in Swinton is as a bitch, a perfectionist, "RSC snob,"and relentless organiser. Locals say she once stopped a performance mid-line to correct scansion. Chloe interprets this as evidence of artistic tyranny. She has no vision. Chloe wishes she'd locked her up with her equally awful sister.

Miriam now runs the show. She's taken Janine's place as director, stripped out all Chloe's modern ideas, and insists the play be "authentic Shakespeare."Chloe's convinced Miriam only took over to humiliate her family again and reassert the Davenham legacy.

🧐 Secrets

She kidnapped Janine "for art."

She introduced the real dagger.

She thinks Miriam's direction will "kill the show."

She sometimes hears Janine's voice in her head giving notes - though it might actually just be Janine shouting from the barn.

She sent her script and modern Baz Luhrmann inspired costume ideas out and hopefully everyone will pay attention to them not Miriam's (er, Shakespeare's) script

She realises she will have to release Janine after the performance, who after three weeks as her prisoner is not going to be overly happy: but at least she is not dead like everyone believes?

And it will be totally worth it, if she can get to stage her vision of Romeo and Juliet and can persuade Angel to elope with her and live happily ever after somewhere far away?



Chloe Grice

Moira Grice (

Chloe's mum! Drinks gin like water.

Flirting with Alan Moreby - dangerously close to reviving old Grice/Davenham scandal.

Secretly proud of Chloe for shaking up the village - might bankroll her next project.

Alan Moreby

Haunted (possibly literally) by his father the late vicar's reputation for dabbling in the occult.

Knows something about that antique dagger. Chloe found it in the vicarage cupboard and borrowed it; maybe should have asked him?

Used to fancy **Moira Grice**; now broods about sin, faith, and catering budgets.

Peter Barrow

Kind, practical, quietly infatuated with Miriam so clearly insane. Married to your cousin Philomena Grice who is currently off with her tennis coach and banjo tutor Greg in the Algarve.

May have once known Marianne Davenham "biblically.", or so the gossip says. Chloe suspects he's hiding an electrical fault that caused all the ghostlight flickers.

Nora Culshaw

Runs the tea table and the séance circuit. Claims to have "spoken" to Marianne's spirit. Keeps a diary full of gossip - Chloe once read three pages before guilt hit.

Angel

Smart, steady, and the most beautiful person Chloe's ever met. You are pretty sure they feel the same: True Love!

CHLOE GRICE - CHARACTER POWERS

 **Green Power** – "Creative Vision"(once a performed scene)

Effect: At any time a scene is staged, Chloe may announce "Let's make it cinematic!" She can activate her soundtrack and make everyone on stage dance, or she can say "movie style" and anyone on stage must act in exaggerated "movie style"- dramatic poses, whispered monologue, lens-flare emotion. It lasts twenty seconds, and when it ends, the scene continues naturally, as if it was all in Chloe's head (or camera).

 **Red Power** – "Opening Night Epiphany" (Use once in Act V only)

Effect: When everything's collapsing, Chloe may declare "This is my masterpiece!". She may then suggest one change to reality, as if the game was a movie and she is breaking the fourth wall. It's true for thirty seconds before we realise Chloe has lost the plot...

At the end of the half-minute, the illusion breaks and all chaos returns – but one emotional truth or secret revealed during that time is remembered by everyone as if it was once true. .

Purpose:

A spectacular Act V spotlight that fuses her delusion and genius, forcing everyone to confront what the show has really been about.

It's the comic-tragic climax of her arc.

Tommy Moreby

Local electrician, lifelong geek, and accidental hero. Tommy Moreby joined the Swinton Village Players because someone told him there'd be free sandwiches and a chance to "test the new dimmer pack." Now he's single-handedly responsible for keeping the entire production illuminated - and, possibly, for keeping the ghosts of 1997 in check. Think: Bruce Willis in *Die Hard* - if John McClane had been issued a headset, a soldering iron, and a PAT-testing certificate instead of a gun. Here only as a favour to Alex...

You've lived in Swinton your whole life, and if there's one thing you've learned it's this: never trust the wiring. You joined the Swinton Village Players for what was supposed to be one weekend's work - "just check the dimmer pack," Alex Barrow said. That was two years ago. Now you're the one keeping the whole enterprise literally illuminated, armed with a soldering iron, a roll of gaffer tape, and a battered PAT-testing certificate. The sandwiches you were promised have long since vanished, but the drama never does.

You're the practical one in a village where everyone else is one strong emotion away from combusting. You rent the flat above your mum's hair salon and collect vintage torches "for comfort." People think you're unflappable. You are - mostly. But every time the ghostlight flickers, you remember the night in 1997 when it first went wrong.

1997

Back then you were a gangly teenager running the sound cues and lights for the Players' ill-fated production of *Romeo & Juliet*, but it was the pyrotechnics you loved the most. It was your job to set off the Catherine wheels and make thunder for the tomb scene. The storm rolled in just as Marianne Davenham, the director, went offstage. The lights failed, the ghostlight flared white as magnesium, and by the time anyone's eyes adjusted she was gone. They found her script by the wings and the faint smell of lilac and cigarette smoke. People said she'd run away. You never believed that. You still see that flash of light sometimes, when a circuit arcs.

The Ghostlight

The ghostlight - that old brass lamp with its cracked bulb - has burned ever since. You rewired it years ago, and you're the only one who knows it still

shares a breaker with the smoke machine. Every time someone uses the fog for "atmosphere," the lamp sputters, and the cast whisper that Marianne is restless. You'd fix it properly if anyone let you near it without a ritual prayer first.

Bonfire Night

Then there was this year's Bonfire Night. You were in charge of fireworks again, running the sound system from the green, watching sparks spin into the wet November dark. You saw Janine Davenham, the director, talking to a woman in a long coat through the smoke. You looked down to adjust the volume; when you looked up again, both women had vanished. It could have been the crowd, or the fog, or something else entirely. You don't know. You told the police you weren't sure which direction they went. You didn't mention the smell of ozone and hairspray that hung in the air afterwards.

Opening Night

Now it's opening night for *Romeo & Juliet* again, and everyone's whispering. The ghostlight's flickering, just like before. Chloe Grice's "modern lighting rig" keeps tripping breakers, Miriam Davenham keeps invoking her dead sister, and you're the one everyone blames whenever the lights twitch. You've started talking to the lamp like an old friend: Come on, mate, one more cue and we can go home.

You're trying to stay sensible, but something's off. You know you rewired the system properly; you know no one's touched the fuses except you. Yet sometimes you come into the hall after hours and find footprints in the dust by the stage, or hear the soft hum of the ghostlight when it shouldn't be powered. Maybe it's Chloe sneaking in to "add atmosphere." Maybe it's the ghost.

The Dagger

You're not entirely innocent yourself. When Chloe asked you to get rid of a "dangerously sharp" prop dagger, you gave it a polish under the stage lights, decided it was harmless, and put it back on the prop table. It wasn't harmless. The cut on your thumb proves that.



Tommy Moreby

Now the knife's gone, and half the cast swear it moves on its own. You'd confess, but every time you open your mouth someone screams about curses.

Evelyn

At least there's Lady Evelyn Barrow. Somehow she's taken a shine to you. It began when she spilled gin across your lighting desk during last year's panto and insisted on "helping you dry it." Since then she's made a habit of leaning over your shoulder, smelling of Chanel No. 5 and danger. She calls you "my electrician in shining armour." You refill her glass; she straightens your collar. The microphones are always live when she flirts. You're half certain she's joking and half afraid she isn't.

Haunted?

You tell yourself you're just here to keep the lights on, but you can't shake the feeling that you're standing on a loop of bad wiring stretching back to 1997. Marianne vanished during a storm. Janine vanished during the fireworks. Now the ghostlight sputters again, and you've seen a figure in white move across the stage when you were sure you were alone.

Maybe it's a trick of the fluorescents. Maybe it's faulty voltage. Or maybe the ghosts of Swinton have finally learned how to use your circuits. Either way, you're the only person who can keep the show from descending into literal darkness - and if the lamp dies tonight, you're not sure what else might come back on when you turn the power back up.

And tonight you found a weird inscription chalked in the lighting booth. "Marianne. Prayers. Light candles." It actually spooked you a bit; you think you saw it long ago in a book about ghosts, the same words?

Warring Directors

Both Miriam, Janine's (and Marianne's) sister AND Chloe Grice claim to be directing tonight. You have two scripts, two lighting plans and no idea which is correct. Play it be ear?



What Tommy Knows

You spend most of rehearsals half-hidden behind the lighting desk, which means people forget you're there. They whisper, they plot, they argue, and you keep your head down, pretending to test cables. That's how you've learned more about these people than anyone else in Swinton.

You know that **Miriam Davenham** is scared. Everyone thinks she's iron discipline and HB pencils, but you've seen her hands shake when the ghostlight flickers. She talks to it sometimes, murmuring like it's her sister listening from the dark. You once caught her scribbling "for Marianne" in the margins of the rehearsal notes, then crossing it out and replacing it with "for Janine." She believes there's a curse, and the only thing stronger than her terror is her determination not to show it.

Chloe Grice gives you the creeps, though you'd never say it aloud. She keeps adding new fairy lights and strobes to "help the aesthetic," and you keep unplugging them before they blow a fuse. You're not sure what she's done, but you've seen her sneaking out late at night towards the petrol station with a shopping bags and a guilty face. You assume she's meeting someone?

Angel is decent-practical, dry-humoured, and probably the only one who thanks you for fixing things. But even you can see how Chloe looks at them: like the first spotlight after a blackout. Angel hasn't noticed yet, or pretends not to, which is probably wise. They're too professional to get dragged into whatever creative breakdown is brewing.

Alan Moreby, your cousin, thinks no one notices the way he looks at Moira Grice. He's got that doomed-romantic thing going on, all sighs and scripture and gin. You've seen them after parish meetings, sharing a cigarette behind the vestry door.

You've known **Nora Culshaw** since childhood. She used to run the tombola at the fête and once tried to contact your dead goldfish with a planchette. She still believes she's psychic, and

Tommy Moreby

she's been holding secret "vigils" to free Janine's spirit. You fixed her kettle last week and noticed the séance notes: "ghostlight = gateway." She's dangerous only in the way gossip is dangerous—it spreads, and nobody knows where it started.

Peter Barrow is a good man, though haunted. You've seen him staring at the ghostlight like it's judging him. He was there in '97 too, younger then, helping Marianne set props. When you mentioned the flash of light that night, he went pale and changed the subject. You'd swear he knows more about what happened to her than he's telling.

You once overheard **Juliet Davenham** crying in the wings after rehearsal, whispering, "Don't make me vanish too." You wanted to tell her everything would be fine, but the ghostlight flickered just then and she bolted. Later, you saw her texting someone under the table during tea break—**Rosie Grice**, you think. You're not blind; you recognise star-crossed chaos when you see it.

Rosie Grice calls you "Techno Tommy" and means it kindly. She's too alive, too bright, too reckless—exactly the kind of person who doesn't notice the wiring burning behind her. You've caught her rehearsing kisses under a single spotlight, muttering "for the aesthetic." You're fairly sure Miriam would exorcise her if she knew.

And **Alex Barrow**, your mate and fellow tech, knows most of this but pretends not to. The two of you have an unspoken pact: if it isn't on fire, it isn't your problem. Still, you've seen them pocket things that shouldn't be missing—scripts, cue sheets, bits of tape with notes written on them. He's covering for someone, though you're not sure who.

The truth is, everyone in Swinton has a secret. You just happen to hear them first, echoing through the intercom or humming down a microphone cable. You tell yourself it's not your job to interfere. But you also know that when the lights go out tonight, all those secrets will come spilling into the dark—and it'll fall to you to bring the power back before

Tommy's Powers

■ Green Power - "The Technician's Touch": As needed.

You've always had a gift with circuits. Alex says you "speak fluent 240 volts." When things start to go wrong - when the lights flicker, or the microphones fail, ghostlight hum rises - you can touch the wall, the cable, the desk, anything in the system, and steady it. The lights hold. The room takes a breath. No matter how hard people try and sabotage stuff given a few minutes roleplay and some technical talk you can fix it.

■ Amber Power - "Take the house to Half". Once per game.

Once in any scene, when the chaos gets too bright, you can dim everything - literally or metaphorically. You call out, "Lights to half!" and the air seems to change. Voices lower. Arguments falter. For a moment, it feels like being backstage again: safe, half-lit, the real world waiting just beyond the curtain. Everyone has to slow down, and you may summon one actor from the stage, or prevent a green or orange power working on stage.

■ Red Power - "Bring the House Lights Up" Act 5 only.

You've been afraid of this since 1997. You told yourself it was just bad wiring, but deep down you've always known: the hall remembers. In the final act, when everything has gone to hell - when the ghosts walk, or the storm hits, or the dagger gleams where it shouldn't - you can use your one real act of courage. You throw the master switch. You bring the house lights up. It's performance over, and the audience troops out in the night.



Norah Culshaw

Loud, loyal, and impossible to ignore, Nora Culshaw has been part of the Swinton Village Players since the last century and still calls the props cupboard "my domain." To outsiders she's a harmless busybody; to insiders, she's the glue that keeps this shambolic troupe together. Nora has an irreverent sense of humour, a mischievous streak a mile wide, and an unshakeable belief that the show must go on - even if the ghosts have other plans. Eccentric, brave, and big-hearted. A cross between Julie Walters in *Educating Rita* and Sigourney Weaver in *Ghostbusters*, with a video camera in one hand and a custard cream in the other. Her son Tony is playing Tybalt.

You've been part of the Swinton Village Players since before they had the new chairs, the new lighting rig, or half their current "visionaries." You were here in 1997 when Marianne Davenham vanished mid-performance, and you've been keeping the kettle boiling and the stories alive ever since. Some call you a gossip; you prefer the term oral historian.

By day you help at the primary school and occasionally the church fête. By night, you're the beating heart of Swinton drama - the woman who knows where every costume is buried and which rehearsal cupboard has the best acoustics for weeping. You're not in it for the fame; you're in it because somebody has to make sure the show survives the egos, the affairs, and the hauntings.

Family

Your son, Tony, is playing Tybalt - full of passion, eyeliner, and terrible ideas - and your niece Maggie's Mercutio, which means you've got both sides of that fatal sword fight in the family. You tell them to keep it theatrical, not homicidal. They don't always listen.

You've seen things in this hall that would curdle the instant coffee. Shadows moving where there shouldn't be shadows. A voice humming "Kiss Me, Kate" long after midnight. A shape at the back door that vanishes when you call out. You've been keeping a diary since Bonfire Night,

when Janine Davenham disappeared, and it's full of little details no one else remembers - the smell of lilac, the fizz of static when the lights flicker, the faint echo of applause when the hall's empty.

You're certain the spirit of someone is trapped here - Marianne Davenham, maybe, or poor Janine, or both tangled up like the cables **Tommy Moreby's** always swearing at. The others laugh, but when the ghostlight burns low, they stop laughing. You believe the lamp feeds on attention: the more they whisper about ghosts, the brighter it glows. That's why you've been campaigning quietly to extinguish it. Not to banish Marianne - to release her.

Miriam Davenham, of course, thinks you're deranged. You pity her. She's wound so tight you could use her as a spring. You remember her as a shy little thing at the back of the hall during the old pantos, eyes wide with wonder. Now she's director, she talks about "discipline" and "respect for the text" as if that'll keep the dead away.

Then there's **Lady Evelyn Barrow**, who flutters around with her pearls and her gin, pretending to be too clever for superstition. She's been relighting the ghostlight for the press photos, and you've told her - more than once - that she's feeding it. She smirked and said, "Then let's hope it's hungry, darling."

You've enlisted **Angel**, who seems sensible enough, to help with your "release ritual." You told them it's just a bit of theatre - candles, humming, maybe a prayer - but the truth is you're hoping to free Janine's spirit before opening night. If the lamp goes out and the air grows still, you'll know you've succeeded.

You keep everyone's secrets in your biscuit tin. You know about Miriam and Peter's thing - you saw the rose she hid in her prompt book. You've heard **Alan Moreby** praying a little too long while looking furtively in **Moira's** direction. You even know that Chloe's been sneaking off at night, though you don't know who she's shagging. You never set out to be Swinton's confessor, but people talk more

Norah Culshaw

freely when they've got a custard cream in their hand.

Ghosts

You've lived long enough to know that some buildings remember. Swinton Village Hall does. You can feel it in the boards under your shoes - a kind of resonance, like the hum after applause. Most people call it "old wiring." You call it company.

You were there in 1997, when the ghostlight first flared. Marianne Davenham, the director then, vanished halfway through the final performance of *Romeo & Juliet*. You remember the moment clearly: the storm battering the roof, the power surging, the audience whispering as the light in the wings burned white-hot. Marianne had been rehearsing Juliet's death scene herself to demonstrate "emotional truth." When the blackout hit, she went into the wings. When the power came back - gone. No body, no scream, just the smell of lilac and cigarette smoke and that uncanny shimmer in the air.

The police said she ran off with a man or ended her life in the river; you never believed it. You've seen too many cold cups of tea left out for people who never came home. You know the difference between a scandal and a haunting. The truth is simpler and stranger: Marianne's spirit never left the hall. She's tied to it, like a director who can't stop giving notes. Every time the ghostlight flickers, you feel her trying to speak.

Then came Bonfire Night this year, and Janine Davenham vanished the same way - into the smoke, right under your nose. You were by the hot dog stand, telling her not to worry about the weather. She said, "If the light goes out, I'll relight it." Those were her last words to you. You heard fireworks, saw sparks, and she was gone. Two women, both Davenham by blood or fate, both swallowed by fire and smoke. Coincidence? Don't insult your intelligence.

You've made a study of the ghostlight - your own private séance. You know the legends: every theatre keeps one lamp burning so the spirits of old actors can find their way. But in Swinton, it's

different. Ours burns to contain them. When it flickers, the veil thins. When it dies, something crosses over. You've heard the sighs from the wings, the soft applause after midnight. You've found the chalk messages on the floorboards - "Marianne. Prayers. Light candles." You've copied them into your diary, just in case they fade.

Miriam insists the lamp must never go out, that it protects us. But you know better. The light isn't protecting anyone; it's feeding something. Every night it burns, Marianne grows more restless. Maybe Janine's joined her now, two directors wrestling for one stage. That's why you've planned your release ritual. Just a small, harmless act - a few tealights, a whispered prayer, perhaps Angel to keep you company. If you can extinguish the ghostlight for one full minute, the spirits will be free, and Swinton can finally rehearse in peace.

You don't think of it as exorcism. It's compassion. Every time someone sneers at your stories, you remember how cold the hall felt after the power cut - and how warm it became when the light flared again, as if someone was standing right behind you. You've seen what denial does to the Davenhams: it eats them alive. You'd rather be ridiculous and right than dignified and haunted.

You've started noticing small signs lately: a faint perfume of lilac drifting from the vestry corridor; the ghostlight humming like a kettle just before it boils; the shape of a woman in a veil reflected in the dressing-room mirror. Sometimes she's tall and graceful - Marianne. Sometimes smaller, frightened - Janine. Once, for a moment, you thought you saw both, flickering like double exposure. Maybe the light isn't just feeding them. Maybe it's trying to choose.

Everyone's got their theories - Peter muttering about wiring, Tommy hiding behind his multimeter, Miriam clutching her pencil like a crucifix, Evelyn calling it "marvellous PR." But you've been here longest. You know the truth under the varnish: the hall remembers, and the dead remember too.

You just hope that, when you finally turn off that lamp, they'll forgive you for letting them go.



Norah Culshaw

Personality

Warm, meddling, endlessly curious, and absolutely certain she's right. She loves a bit of melodrama but means well. She can talk to anyone and make them talk back. When frightened, she covers it with jokes - or tea.

Relationships

Tony Culshaw (your son)

Tony is your pride and perpetual migraine. You raised him mostly on your own, and while he's all attitude and eyeliner now, you still see the boy who once cried because his papier-mâché sword broke before the nativity. He's playing Tybalt - of course he is - full of fire and tragedy and inappropriate ad-libs. You try to keep him grounded, but he's as theatrical as you are and twice as stubborn. You worry that he's getting too deep into the "method," that one day he'll mistake passion for performance. When people gossip about the Culshaws being "a bit much," you remind them that drama runs in the blood.

Maggie Culshaw (your daughter)

Maggie's Mercutio to Tony's Tybalt - which is to say, disaster waiting for its cue. You adore her; she's wild and funny and heartbreakingly fragile underneath the glitter. You see the parts of yourself you lost years ago: the hunger to shine, the belief that one good performance can fix everything. You keep an eye on her because you remember how fast ambition can curdle when nobody claps loudly enough. You also know she was involved in that bank-robbery fiasco with Alex Barrow though you never mention it when the tea's poured. You worry that the money was never recovered though. Maggie hasn't got it that's clear! Maggie's like fireworks: beautiful, loud, and likely to set something on fire.

Miriam Davenham

You've known the Davenham girls since they were young. You remember Marianne directing Cinderella in '96 - brilliant, difficult Marianne - and little Miriam sweeping the stage in borrowed wings. After Marianne vanished, something in Miriam hardened. She turned her

grief into precision, her fear into control. You can see it every time she snaps at Chloe or rearranges the props for the fifth time. You tell people she's cursed, but what you mean is: she's still broken. You love her like a niece, though you'd never admit it. When she looks at you, you can see her calculating whether you're another liability or her last friend.

Lady Evelyn Barrow

Evelyn is your opposite in every way: you have biscuits, she has gin; you have sincerity, she has headlines. You've been trading barbs and gossip for decades, and you wouldn't have it any other way. You roll your eyes at her "darling"s and her cigarette holder, but you can't deny she brings glamour to the hall. Sometimes, late at night, you catch her looking as lonely as you feel, and you make her a cup of tea she pretends not to want. The two of you are like rival queens ruling the same crumbling kingdom.

Angel

You like Angel. They're polite, calm, and remind you of teachers who actually got results at the primary school. You've roped them into helping you "release Janine's spirit," telling them it's a bit of theatre to soothe the troupe's nerves. You haven't told them that you mean it. Angel's sceptical, but kind enough to humour you - and secretly you think they need something mystical in their life. You plan to convert them by revelation before the curtain falls.

Chloe Grice

You're convinced Chloe's got the artistic temperament - all fire and breakdowns. She's so busy being visionary she's forgotten to eat properly. You try to look after her, bring her biscuits and common sense, but she always looks like she's about to start crying or quoting Baz Luhrmann. You think she's grieving Janine's disappearance more than she'll admit. What you don't realise is how much more she's hiding. To you, she's just another over-wrought creative who needs a good cry and a custard cream.

Tommy Moreby

Norah Culshaw

Tommy's a sweet lad - practical, kind, and allergic to nonsense. You rely on him more than you admit. He rolls his eyes when you talk about ghosts, but you've seen the way he stiffens when the ghostlight flickers. You think he's scared of something - maybe his own memories of that night in 1997. You like him; he listens when nobody else does. He's the only one you'd trust with the keys and the kettle. You're half-tempted to set him up with Maggie, just to see who short-circuits first.

Alan Moreby

Alan's charming in that disreputable way vicars' sons often are. You've known him since he was the altar boy who stole communion wine. He's older, greyer, and twice as slippery now. You've noticed how his sermons about redemption always end up directed at Moira Grice. You pretend not to notice the tension, but you've already nicknamed them "the gin saints of St Agatha's." You think he's haunted by his father's reputation, though you can't tell whether that's guilt or vanity.

Moira Grice

You've never quite forgiven the Grices for being on the wrong side of every scandal. Still, Moira's impossible not to like - she's gracious, articulate, and aging better than anyone deserves. You suspect she knows more about the 1997 disappearance than she lets on. You also know she and Alan have been sharing a "bottle of mutual understanding" behind the vestry. You'd warn her it'll end in tears, but you're too fond of the gossip.

Peter Barrow

Peter's the good sort: steady hands, kind eyes, and a haunted air that makes women want to feed him. You remember him from the 1997 production too. You saw him follow Marianne backstage just before she disappeared. You've never told a soul - not even Tony. He's in love with Miriam, and you find it rather touching, though you suspect she'll break his heart just by tidying it away.

Juliet Davenham & Rosie Grice

You've got a soft spot for both of them, even if their affair is tempting fate in capital letters. They

remind you of yourself at their age - all feeling, no filter. You'd normally tell them to be careful, but this play has taken on a will of its own, and you can sense that their romance might be the key to ending the curse. You make them tea and pretend not to notice when they hold hands.

NORAH'S POWERS

■ Green Power – "A Feeling in My Water"

You've always had the knack - that tingling sense when something's off. Sometimes it's the air going cold, sometimes it's your knees aching before a revelation. Once per Act you may declare, "I've got a feeling in my water," and ask one person a direct yes/no question about what's really going on. They must answer honestly, but only a few words will suffice. You use this all the time: during tea breaks, ghost hunts, or arguments about biscuits. People humour you, but it's uncanny how often your hunches turn out right.

■ Amber Power – "The Séance of Sensible Women" (Once per game)

Once in the game you can call an impromptu séance - sometimes deliberate, sometimes just when you talk too much about ghosts. You take someone's hand (consensually) in each of yours and murmur, "If there's anyone here who wishes to speak..." For the next minute, everyone nearby must treat the space as charged: lights may flicker, memories surface, confessions spill. No one knows if it's the dead, electricity, or your sheer willpower - but the energy changes. The more participants the more dramatic the results. The GM will tell you what happens.

It's dramatic, messy, and never quite under your control... which is exactly how you like it.

■ Red Power – "Speak, Spirit!" (Once, in Act V only)

When everything's collapsing - ghosts, lies, and love triangles tangled together - you may raise your voice and cry, "Speak, spirit, if you be among us!" Name the spirit you are trying to summon. The GMs will handle the rest.



Moira Grice

Graceful, articulate, and just a little formidable, Moira Grice is the undisputed queen of Swinton society; or at least she would be, if the village had a society worth ruling. Once hailed as "a revelation" for her turn as Juliet in the 1997 *Romeo & Juliet*, Moira has never quite forgiven the world for moving on without her. The night the director, Janine Davenham, vanished, Moira's performance was cut short and her chance at stardom extinguished. Some say she was questioned by police only because she was too convincing when she rehearsed Juliet's death scene; she insists it was the worst humiliation of her life. Mention the Davenhams and her smile tightens just a little too much. The fact her daughter is playing Romeo has done little to make things better...

About Moira

Graceful, articulate, and utterly composed, Moira Grice has been the reigning queen of Swinton Village for as long as anyone can remember.

She was once hailed as "a revelation" for her turn as Juliet in the 1997 production of *Romeo & Juliet* - the same cursed performance that ended in the disappearance of director Marianne Davenham. That night changed her forever.

For years afterwards, whispers followed her: that Marianne and she had argued (when didn't you?), that Marianne was jealous (she was), that she'd "taken the final bow too soon." The police questioned her only because, they said, she was too convincing when she rehearsed Juliet's death scene.

She's since reclaimed her reputation with icy dignity, directing every conversation as deftly as she once delivered a monologue. Now she plays Lady Capulet, older, wiser, and determined to prove she's still the best actress in Swinton. Her daughter Rosie is playing Romeo, and Moira pretends to be proud of her. In truth, the thought of seeing that story staged again - with Davenhams back on the committee - makes her skin crawl. The past feels dangerously unfinished.

💀 Family History & The Feud

The Grices and Davenhams have been feuding for generations. Officially, it began in 1792, when a Grice mason "accidentally" short-changed a Davenham carpenter at the Red Lion. Unofficially, it's been love, betrayal, and bad business ever since.

Moira was the first Grice to break the pattern: she and Marianne Davenham were inseparable friends in their youth. They shared dresses, dreams, and it seemed had ended the curse.

Then when Marianne vanished in 1997, the village whispered that it was Moira's doing - that the argument over casting and ambition had turned to tragedy. Even worse, Your brothers Bill and Simon also both left the village that summer. The tabloids suggested they'd "fed Marianne to pigs" or buried her under the new bus shelter. Moira knows the truth is more banal and more shameful: they fled to avoid scandal, and the rest of the family's been paying for it ever since. Bill went to Florida before Marianne's disappearance and never returned; Simon declared he was gay and left home for London, and you know nothing of what became of his after.

The feud burned on in polite smiles and committee votes. Moira married, divorced, and raised her daughter alone. The Davenhams carried on with their grief, their ghosts, and their Shakespeare. Now the cycle's repeating - and Moira feels it. History doesn't echo in Swinton. It shouts.

♥ Romantic Entanglement – "The Gin-Soaked Almost-Affair"

Alan Moreby has been your drinking partner at countless parish meetings, funerals, and opening nights. He's charming, rumpled, and just damaged enough to make you feel alive again.

You flirt under the guise of moral support - "two

Moira Grice

veterans of village life keeping each other upright"- but the truth is simpler: you love him, and you hate yourself for it. You drink gin in the vestry and talk about forgiveness, but you both know there's more between you than words. Every time you nearly kiss, the church organ wheezes, or Nora walks in with a tray of custard creams.



Secrets

You and Marianne Davenham shared a forbidden friendship once, doomed by family pride. You were the last person to speak to Marianne in 1997. She told you: "If the light goes out, don't follow." You ignored her. The next moment, she was gone.

You know your sons didn't kill her. Bill was already in Florida where he remains to this day, and Simon was gay and infatuated with some pop star called Stephen Gately. You've kept that truth buried for twenty-eight years.

Sometimes, when the ghostlight flickers, you hear Marianne's voice whisper your name. You drink to drown it. You're terrified your daughter Rosie will suffer the same fate - swallowed by the Davenhams' curse and your own mistakes in forgiving them and trying to deny the power of the feud.



How to Play Moira

Carry yourself like you're still centre stage, even when you're just pouring tea.

Everything you say sounds like it should be quoted in the Gazette.

You use poise as armour, laughter as smoke, and gin as courage.

You're not heartless - you're terrified of feeling too much.

If anyone gets close, you'll push them away before they can vanish like Marianne did.

You are both Juliet grown old and Lady Capulet reborn - the ghost of the past and the woman who refuses to die with it.



Moira Grice – Relationships & Gossip

Rosie Grice (Your Daughter)

Your little girl, your pride, your punishment. Rosie's a force of nature - dazzling, reckless, entirely too much like you were. You see her standing where you once stood, full of love and certainty and doomed conviction that art can heal a wound. You want to protect her from everything, but you're the reason she's here: you raised her in the wings, fed her applause like oxygen, and she's addicted.

You're proud that she's playing Romeo, but terrified that she's repeating history - another Grice in love with another Davenham. You've warned her that Juliet Davenham is "bad luck personified." She laughs and calls you melodramatic. She doesn't know you're understating the case.

You've overheard whispers that Rosie and Juliet have been texting under their stage names, sending heart emojis wrapped in Shakespeare. It makes you feel old, and haunted, and heartbreakingly certain that you're watching the past circle back for another bow.

Juliet Davenham

You can't look at her without thinking of Marianne - those same eyes, that same fragile confidence. You've tried to be kind, but it's difficult. She's young, beautiful, and a Davenham: a triple offence.

You see how she looks at Rosie, and you recognise the expression. It's love, and it's foolish. The kind that ends with one of them crying in the car park and the other being written about in the Gazette. You pity her, but not enough to trust her.

You also know her mother vanished years ago, leaving her to be raised by her aunt Janine - who has now vanished too. You can't decide whether Juliet's cursed or contagious.



Moira Grice

Miriam Davenham

Your oldest rival. You'd say "frenemy," but that implies humour, and Miriam doesn't do humour. She's Marianne's surviving sister and now director, wielding the script like a crucifix. You respect her talent - she's good, you'll admit it - but she's obsessed. Every rehearsal's a séance for her dead relatives. You can't sneeze without her taking it as a ghostly manifestation.

Lady Evelyn Barrow

Your glamorous sparring partner, professional gossip, and the only person who can match your gin intake without collapsing. You've known Evelyn since your brief London stage days, where she perfected the art of fainting into publicity. She returned to Swinton claiming to be "retired from the West End," though everyone knows she was sacked from *Private Lives* for scandal.

You enjoy her company as long as she's not talking about you to the press - which she always is. She still calls you "darling Moira, that tragic beauty of the 1997 production." You've smiled through gritted teeth since 2001.

Gossip you know: Evelyn's been flirting with Tommy Moreby over the lighting desk, probably because she likes the glow. She also keeps calling the *Barchester Gazette* whenever she needs column inches, which explains the sudden surge of "Ghost Returns to Village Hall" headlines. You suspect she knows far too much about the Grice-Davenham feud for an outsider, which means someone's been talking. Possibly Alan. Possibly you, after your third G&T.

Alan Moreby

Ah, Alan. The only man in Swinton who can quote scripture and make it sound indecent. You've known him forever - parish meetings, charity galas, whispered arguments in the vestry. You share an affection built on gin, guilt, and mutual loneliness. You drink together because it's the one space where neither of you has to perform. He believes his father killed Marianne

Davenham. You know that's nonsense, but you've never corrected him; the truth would be worse. You've almost kissed him twice - once after a funeral, once after a blackout. Each time, something absurd interrupted you. Perhaps the universe is saving you from yourselves.

Peter Barrow

A quiet man with patient eyes and the air of someone permanently two steps from confession. You've always liked him. There's something old-fashioned about his kindness. He was there in 1997 - helping Marianne backstage. You remember seeing him follow her into the wings. He won't talk about it, but his face gives him away every time someone mentions her name. He's now hopelessly infatuated with Miriam, which is either touching or tragic, depending on how many drinks you've had. You've warned him - gently - that Davenhams ruin the men who try to save them. He smiled and said, "Maybe I like a challenge." Poor fool.

Nora Culshaw

Dear Nora, the patron saint of hysteria. You've known her since before she dyed her hair. She's part gossip, part oracle, entirely indestructible. You find her both infuriating and comforting. She's been talking to the dead for so long that you half believe she's on commission. You let her rant about séances and spirits because it gives everyone something to laugh at - but when she talks about Marianne's voice in the wings, you listen. You remember that voice too.

Gossip you know: Nora keeps a diary of "manifestations" that includes times, temperatures, and biscuit brands. She's planning to turn off the ghostlight to "free the spirit." You think it's idiotic, but you're also curious what will happen if she does. Chloe Grice

Chloe Grice

Moira Grice

A younger cousin from the loud side of the family. Brilliant, volatile, and utterly exhausting. You see her as a walking cautionary tale: talent without grace, ambition without shame. She means well, but she's got that manic glint you recognise from your own mirror at twenty-five. You think she's lost since Janine disappeared - more fragile than she lets on. Still, her Luhrmann-inspired "vision" is ridiculous. Guns, glitter, pop songs - it's vandalism disguised as art. You tell her that often, because someone has to.

Gossip you know: Chloe's been sneaking out after dark with shopping bags. She claims she's "buying props," but someone saw her near the petrol station and told you they think she was buying booze again. As if you'd worry about a little drinking? Also, she has a crush on Angel, though everyone's too polite to say it aloud.

Angel

You barely understand what Angel's doing here - some kind of "arts liaison," whatever that means - but you admire their patience. They're the only person who can calm Chloe down, which makes them invaluable. You suspect they're much sharper than they pretend; they watch everything with quiet amusement. You approve. Angel has a scar on their wrist from a "creative accident," but you've seen their face when anyone mentions fire. You think they were the one who screamed during the blackout. They've also been seen with Nora after hours, carrying tealights and a Tupperware box of sage. You're not judging - just observing.

Evelyn's Gin Circle (the Village Gossips' Society)

When the hall empties and the lights dim, there's always a moment where it's just you, Evelyn, and Nora, sitting with the gin bottle, swapping rumours like old love letters. That's where you've learned everything that matters in Swinton: who's sleeping with whom, who's seeing ghosts, and who's doomed next.

You pretend not to enjoy it. You

 **Green Power** – "The Legacy of Juliet" (whenever someone fluffs a line)

You've played this part before. You know every line, every breath, every heartbeat of the story - and when others forget their cues, you can still make them remember. You use it often, almost without thinking - a little enchantment woven through your voice. Perhaps it's stagecraft. Perhaps it's something older: the power of a woman who refuses to be forgotten. If someone forgets their line, you may tell them it and no one notices: afterwards you may ask them one Yes/No question they must answer honestly in gratitude

 **Amber Power** – "Emotional Range" (Once per game)

Once in any scene where you are on stage (whether you are supposed to be or not), you may summon all your emotional control and let it crack. You drop the mask. The performance stops. Everyone in the room must fall silent for a beat, aware they've just glimpsed something raw and unrepeatable - grief, longing, or rage, depending on your choice. It's why people underestimate you; they forget that behind the glamour is a woman who's lived through too much theatre - and too many ghosts. (let the GM know when you are planning to use this).

 **Red Power** – "The Curtain Call" (Once, in Act V only)

You were there in 1997 when the lights went out and Marianne Davenham disappeared. You were the last Juliet to speak the words, "O happy dagger." In the final act, when all seems chaos - ghosts, daggers, and old love revived - you may use your power by taking centre stage and speaking that line again while holding a REAL dagger.

If you do, everyone must freeze and watch you; the GM calls a time out, and you state who if anyone can act. It lasts two minutes while a deadly silence falls over the theatre. When the moment passes, play resumes, but you might have saved the day, or tragedy may have claimed you.



Lady Evelyn Barrow

Once upon a time, Lady Evelyn Barrow was almost famous...

In the late 1980s she did two episodes of Midsomer Murders, one shampoo advert, and a regional tour of Blithe Spirit in which she fainted spectacularly and was never quite the same again.

When her second husband died (the rich one, not the racing driver), she returned to Swinton "for the peace," immediately took over the local am-dram committee, and installed herself as patron of the Swinton Village Players. She hasn't let go since.

To Evelyn, the line between theatre and life no longer exists - only staging.

If a tragedy happens, she will ensure the Gazette spells her name correctly in the coverage.

She dresses like she's about to open Glyndebourne, drinks gin as if it's a civic duty, and never enters a room without a quote from Noël Coward. She believes the play's haunted, but only because ghosts photograph so well.



Family & Role in the Company

Widow of Sir Percival Barrow ("the linen magnate") and Sterling Bonds the racing driver. Self-appointed patron, producer, and publicist of the Swinton Village Players.

Funded the lighting desk, the ghostlight bulb ("a symbolic expense"), and last year's disastrous musical Chess (the infamous Ladyboys of Swinton version). Thinks she keeps the group solvent through "taste, contacts, and exposure." Actually keeps them solvent through relentless meddling and quietly paying for everything when the treasurer forgets. She has two children; the dependable **Peter** via her first husband, and **Alex** by her wealthy second husband, who expired of heart failure after she appeared nude on stage at a West End production of Oh! Calcutta! Alex has recently been released from prison after a six year spell inside for a failed Halifax building society robbery.



Personality

Evelyn is what would happen if Hyacinth Bucket, Edina Monsoon, and the Bride of Frankenstein ran a drama society together.

She loves art, hates criticism, and can turn any conversation into an anecdote about herself and Sir John Gielgud (whom she once met at a garden centre). Her motto: "There's no such thing as bad press - only bad lighting."



Romantic Entanglement – "The May-December Flirtation"

She's currently flirting with the electrician Tommy "Lighting" Moreby (Tristan Brooks). It started with a fuse-box repair and a shared gin. Evelyn believes he is a chancer using trying to leverage her fame for career advantage. He thinks she can get him television work; at least he'll keep her young - or at least well-lit.

They've been exchanging flirty glances across the lighting rig ever since that day, and you straighten his collar before every run-through; he keeps her glass topped up.



Relationships & Gossip

Moira Grice – The eternal rival.

Evelyn adores Moira as long as she's failing. They share history: two grande dames of a very small stage. Evelyn leaked most of the "Marianne Davenham ghost curse" gossip to the press in 1997 and still insists she did it "to protect the society's reputation." She's determined to capture Moira's downfall in flattering lighting.

She claims Moira once threw a shoe at a theatre critic in Brighton. It's true - Evelyn was the critic.

Miriam Davenham – The serious one.

Lady Evelyn Barrow

Dour, pious, impossible at parties. Evelyn both admires and mocks her: "If restraint were talent, she'd be Judi Dench." She finds Miriam's obsession with the ghostlight hilarious - and perfect for headlines.

Evelyn swears Miriam's "miracle chalk messages" "Marianne. Prayers. Light candles" found written backstage last week were just a publicity stunt gone wrong.

Nora Culshaw - The ghost-bore.

Evelyn treats Nora like a useful stage prop: wind her up, let her talk about ectoplasm, and the press do the rest. Nora once fainted for attention; Evelyn beat her to it. No one outshines Evelyn when the press are around!

Chloe Grice – The "young visionary."

Evelyn calls her "the TikTok director" and alternates between patronising her and trying to exploit her chaos for marketing. She believes Chloe staged the ghost sightings to drum up drama. Her flashy neon guns and pop music version of Romeo and Juliet is dead now Miriam has been appointed director (by you - it looked terrible!)

Rosie & Juliet (the young lovers)

Evelyn thinks they're/ adorable - until they steal the spotlight. Then she becomes the embodiment of jealous applause. She keeps dropping hints to reporters that "the chemistry is unbelievable, darling - possibly because it's not acting."

Alan Moreby – Steady, dull, too fond of Moira. Evelyn uses him as a moral compass: whatever Alan disapproves of, she will do twice. He proposed to her once in 1989. She said yes, then forgot all about it by morning when she sobered up. He has never forgiven Evelyn.

Peter Barrow – Competent but tragic. Evelyn calls him "the man who looks haunted by lighting gels." She suspects he was in love with Marianne and occasionally probes for scandal.

Angel – The artsy one. Evelyn assumes Angel works for the BBC and keeps trying to impress them.

⚡ Ghostlight

Evelyn keeps "tidying" the ghostlight for photo ops, claiming it "shows off my cheekbones."

She accidentally tripped the breaker during her first selfie, starting the "If it goes out, she returns!" hysteria.

She regularly relights the lamp for visiting journalists. She secretly hopes the haunting is real - nothing gets you regional press like a ghost story.

If Miriam faints during the blackout, Evelyn gets the photo that runs on the Gazette front page. She calls it "artistic journalism."

🔪 The Dagger

Evelyn found a real dagger on the props table after rehearsal, thought it was a replica, and waved it about during her interview with the Gazette. The resulting photo ran under the headline: "Lady Patron Defies Ghost with Blade of Truth!" Evelyn was delighted.

😬 Secrets

She was the one who first told the Gazette that Marianne's ghost "haunts the wings."

She knows the side door doesn't lock properly and sometimes sneaks in to rehearse her "impromptu" speeches alone.

She keeps a file of everyone's scandals "for posterity."

She once turned off the ghostlight deliberately to see what would happen. The power failed an hour later. She's been quietly terrified ever since.



Lady Evelyn Barrow

EVELYN'S POWERS

■ Green Power – "I Know the Press"

With a toss of her hair and a name-drop, Evelyn can demand attention or derail any argument by hinting she'll tell the Barchester Gazette. Being made to look ridiculous in the Barchester Gazette is a very real threat and if ignored, well tell a GM.

■ Amber Power – "Another Round, Darlings"(Once per game)

She can "refresh"any social situation - literally or emotionally - forcing a reset to laughter, silence, or fear by puring gin for everyone. Used to defuse or reignite drama as she pleases: everyone who is listening to her must act according to the state suggested by her brilliant emotional manipulation for the next three minutes.

■ Red Power – "Headline News!"(Once, in Act V only)

Evelyn can declare one event "front-page news,"freezing the action as everyone instinctively poses or defends themselves. For 30 seconds, her version of events becomes public truth. Imagine as she takes the photo you realise its going to be tomorrow's headline in The Sun, or at least the Barchester Gazette. The journalists love Lady Evelyn, and this is her power to make something sound either sensational, scandalous, or whatever else she desires - with life-changing consequences for whoever she sets Percy and Tim the Fleet Street Hacks (played by the GM) on. Of course this is a very handy negotiating tool...



Maggie Culshaw

A whirlwind in sequins and sarcasm, Maggie Culshaw is the village's answer to a West End diva who never quite made it past junction 12. The youngest of the Culshaw clan, she's inherited the family's wardrobe cupboard, its gossip archive, and absolutely none of its restraint. Maggie lives for the chaos of opening night: the frantic costume swaps, the whispered scandals, the thrill of stealing a scene just by breathing too loudly. She claims she "could have gone professional" if it weren't for the tragic combination of bad luck, worse men, and that pyrotechnics incident in 2012. Now she treats the Swinton Village Players as both therapy and stage - a place to perform her life as the melodrama it deserves to be. She was the driver on the bank robbery in 2018 that put Alex Barrow in prison, but the charges against Maggie were dropped.

Maggie Culshaw has been the loudest voice in the Swinton Village Players since before the turn of the millennium - part diva, part disaster, all heart. She doesn't enter rooms; she detonates in them, leaving glitter, gossip and confusion in her wake. To some she's a legend, to others a liability, but to Maggie herself she's the only thing keeping village theatre from being buried in beige cardigans and amateur sincerity. "I'm keeping the arts alive, darling," she likes to declare, "one catastrophe at a time."

She was born backstage - daughter of Nora Culshaw, Swinton's tea-brewing medium and reigning monarch of the local Women's Institute séance circuit. Nora believes in ghosts; Maggie believes in applause. They argue about which is more powerful, though the truth is that both are just different kinds of haunting. Her brother Tony is playing Tybalt, Nora's still haunting the props cupboard, and Maggie's treating this production as a kind of personal resurrection: a chance to prove she's not just the comic relief in somebody else's tragedy.

Mercutio is her dream role - witty, doomed, glorious in defeat. She plays every line as if she's got the West End on the other side of the curtain and the bailiffs on this one. Her death scene is legendary: six minutes, three gasps and one faintly erotic groan

that's caused actual complaints. But there's an edge to her sparkle these days, a weary undertone that's new. It's not just acting. Maggie's seen real blood, not stage blood - and she's done things she can't joke away.

The Halifax Job

Alex Barrow was Maggie's worst idea and her best story. They'd met at a protest gig - Alex was doing a monologue about austerity dressed as Thatcher's ghost, and Alex was the one with the sound system and the smirk. They'd fallen into each other the way fire falls into petrol: fast, bright, and absolutely inevitable. For a while, it worked. They were Bonnie and Clyde on benefits, holding court at the Red Lion, finishing each other's sentences, sharing cigarettes and schemes. The trouble was, neither of them could tell where the performance ended and the plan began.

In 2018, she found herself in the wrong kind of play: the Halifax Building Society Affair, as the tabloids later called it. Alex was the mastermind; Maggie was the getaway driver.

Alex had that restless energy Maggie loved - always about to pull a stunt, always certain the world owed them an audience. When they came up with the Halifax idea, it was meant to be a prank. "We're not stealing," Alex had said. "We're reallocating funds." Maggie, bored and broke, said yes because she thought it sounded like a plot twist.

The job was chaos from the start - a clown show with balaclavas. They ended up with more cash than conscience, and when the police came, Maggie bolted while Alex stayed. It wasn't bravery; it was bad timing. Alex shouted for her to run, and she did.

It all went wrong, as things around Maggie tend to. Alex got six years. Maggie walked free "for lack of evidence," though everyone in Swinton assumed she'd flirted her way out of prison time. They were half right. What no one knows is that she took the bag of cash and buried it herself - forty-six thousand



Maggie Culshaw

pounds sealed in biscuit tins and hidden under the Old Barn in Grimacre Wood.

It wasn't greed; it was panic. She told herself she'd dig it up later, return it somehow, make it right. But every time she goes near the woods, something feels wrong: the air colder, the silence thicker. Once she heard hammering; another time, laughter. And now the villagers whisper about eerie wailing in the woods at night and Maggie can't shake the feeling that her past is about to claw its way back up through the mud.

Alex is back too, released, watchful, and bitter. They've been circling one another ever since, all charm and unspoken threats. Alex wants their share, and Maggie keeps promising she'll "sort it soon." She has told Alex she can't quite remember the exact spot, though, and she suspects the winter floods might have moved the tin. She can't dig without drawing attention, and attention, for once, is something they can't afford. Alex is getting threatening and is still unhappy about taking the rap when she walked free.

The False Alibi

When the Halifax affair imploded, Maggie didn't walk free by luck or charm alone. Alex gave her an alibi - one that should never have held. They both told the police they'd been at the Red Lion that night, drinking gin and gossiping with Lady Evelyn's late husband, Sir Percival Barrow. It was plausible, and the police, dazzled by Maggie's tears and Evelyn's social connections, let it stand. Then, quite conveniently, Sir Percival died that very night - a heart attack, officially, though some say the shock of his wife's performance in "Oh! Calcutta!" led directly to it.

Maggie knows the alibi is a ticking bomb. The times don't match, the witness is dead, and Evelyn's diary will show her husband was choking on his G&T at his wife's nude on stage antics in Soho, not in The Red

42 Lion that night.

Friends?

She's tangled up in everyone's business, of course.

Tony, her brother, suspects she's hiding something and keeps hinting about "family honour." He's right, but she deflects with banter. **Nora** is both her anchor and her embarrassment, forever organising ghost-hunts while Maggie sneaks into her house at night to make sure she's locked the séance cabinet. Lady **Evelyn Barrow** is her drinking companion and dangerous friend; they treat gossip as a sport and scandal as cardio. **Chloe Grice**, all youth and glitter and bad judgement, is a mirror of Maggie ten years ago - or twenty, depending on the gin. Maggie saw Chloe carrying a suspiciously heavy shopping bag the night the fake dagger went missing and has chosen to say nothing. **Miriam Davenham** is the kind of woman Maggie was born to torment, solemn and sanctimonious, a director who believes in purity of art while Maggie believes in the healing power of an ad-lib. **Tommy Moreby** is sweet, steady, and far too good for this madhouse. She teases him relentlessly because he's one of the few people who doesn't flinch when she smiles.

The Forgotten Script

Last week you decided to clear out the cupboard at the back of the village hall. Among the scattered bags and papers in the attic was a battered leather satchel - Janine Davenham's old script from the 1997 *Romeo and Juliet*. You opened it last night, drunk on guilt and cheap wine, and found the pages annotated in an elegant, looping hand that wasn't Janine's at all. The notes were from Marianne Davenham. Tiny, furious corrections in pencil, whole speeches reworked, margin scrawls that read like arguments between sisters. It was the cursed script, the one everyone swore had been destroyed after Marianne vanished. Janine's writing is there too - and it looks like the two sisters were arguing about staging *Romeo and Juliet* as long ago as 1997! You have the script back at your house.

"What's my motivation?"

Maggie Culshaw

As for the ghostlight, the dagger, and the missing woman - they all orbit her like badly aimed spotlight beams. Maggie finds herself caught between truth and performance, laughter and confession. She wants to keep the show running, keep Alex quiet, keep Nora safe, and keep the ghosts - living and dead - at arm's length. She wants to dig up that tin, hand it back, maybe buy herself absolution with interest. But not tonight. Tonight there's lipstick to fix and lines to deliver.

What she truly wants - though she'd never say it aloud - is forgiveness. From Alex, from her mother, from the ghosts. She wants to survive opening night without everything collapsing, to walk offstage to applause instead of sirens. She wants one more ovation before the truth finally takes its bow.

And if, by the time the curtain falls, the audience can't tell whether she's been lying or acting - well, that's theatre, darling.

Ghosts

Meanwhile the village is convulsing over the ghostlight - the flickering lamp in the hall that supposedly appeases the spirits of dead directors. Maggie thinks it's all nonsense, though she admits she's nervous around it. One night, after rehearsal, she saw a figure gliding through the wings: white, veiled, impossibly still. She told everyone later it was "Lady Evelyn rehearsing for her obituary," but the truth is, the figure spoke her name in a hoarse whisper - "Maggie!" She hasn't told a soul.

If her mother Nora insists on holding another midnight séance, Maggie will be there - partly to protect her, partly to prove that none of this is real. And if she's wrong? Well, it wouldn't be the first time she's been on stage with a ghost.

From Maggie's point of view, the whole business with the ghostlight has been pure Swinton - a handful of nervous eccentrics, a flickering lamp, and enough melodrama to power a soap opera. She's been around long enough to see a dozen local

"hauntings," each one fuelled by tea, boredom, and a little gin. Still, even she has to admit this one's got legs. After all, she has never seen the ghost before!

It began, predictably, right after the Bonfire Night party - the same night Janine vanished. Peter Barrow was locking up and swore he heard someone humming *Greensleeves* in the dark. He muttered about bad wiring and carried on, but by Monday Nora was already flapping round the hall with a thermos and a prophecy, claiming she'd heard footsteps and found chalk writing on the stage - "*Marianne. Prayers. Light candles.*" Naturally, she treated it as a message from the other side. Maggie treated it as proof that Nora should stop reading *Take a Break's True Ghost Stories*.

By Tuesday, Miriam had taken charge, as she always does when there's a crisis, real or imagined. She announced that the ghostlight - the old brass lamp that sits in the wings - must burn at all times "for safety and respect." Lady Evelyn, never one to miss a photo opportunity, decided it would look better moved for her selfie and plunged the hall into darkness. Nora fainted, someone screamed, and when the lights came back, the legend was born: "If the lamp goes out, the dead director returns." Maggie laughed herself hoarse.

A week later came the "sighting." Only Evelyn, Peter, and Tommy were there, painting flats, when Evelyn swore she saw a tall veiled woman gliding across the stage with a candle. Evelyn called it "Marianne's ghost come for press coverage." Maggie called it "Evelyn after two G&Ts." Still, the Gazette ran a story, and suddenly everyone was watching that lamp like it was the Queen Mother.

Nora wrote a furious note on the new rota - "Let the poor soul go!" - and Evelyn photographed it for her haunting column. Meanwhile, Peter was



Maggie Culshaw

muttering about loose circuits, and someone said an electrician had been in. That night, apparently, "Marianne's ghost" was seen again - only Angel swears it was tall, wet, and "terrifyingly middle-class." Maggie suspects it was Marianne herself, alive and having a laugh, but she's not about to say that out loud.

Then came the ritual week - Nora sneaking in with Angel for a "release ceremony" involving burning sage and Native American chants ("smudging" apparently) setting off the smoke alarm. Evelyn turned up in a silk dressing gown, phoned the fire brigade, and claimed she was "documenting the paranormal." Peter replaced a plug, Miriam called it a miracle, and by Wednesday everyone was holding prayer circles and crying at the wiring. Maggie mostly sat at the back, watching it unfold like a particularly dire episode of Acorn Antiques.

And then - Thursday night. The thunderstorm. The blackout. The scream. They say Miriam found her "dead" aunt relighting the lamp and fainted on the spot. Evelyn got a photograph of the aftermath - of course she did - and sold it to the Barchester Gazette. Now the whole village thinks the ghost of Marianne Davenham has come home.

Maggie's take? Someone's alive, someone's lying, and someone's going to make a fool of themselves before the curtain goes up. She doesn't believe in ghosts, but she knows guilt when she smells it, and the hall's reeking of it. The lamp keeps flickering, Nora keeps whispering, Miriam's praying, and Evelyn's preening. The way Maggie sees it, it's just another performance - except this one's running on superstition, scandal, and second-hand gin.

Green Power – "Slip away"

Whenever Maggie wants, she may break off a conversation as some sudden distraction occurs (she just says what it is - whippet runs through hall, curtain

catches fire etc) and may immediately remove herself. Whoever she escaped (multiple people if she was talking to many) can not approach her till the next Act. The distractions are minor and quickly resolve themselves; while using this power Maggie must slink around furtively in a melodramatic manner until the next act! Only **Nora** is immune to this power.

Amber Power – "The Chaos Engine"(Once per Act)

Once in any scene, Maggie may turn an ordinary moment into comic disaster - a prop breaks, a fuse blows, a cat sneezes at exactly the wrong time. It's not deliberate sabotage (probably). It's just her presence bending reality into farce. For the rest of that moment, everything becomes heightened: tempers, laughter, panic. She can ride that wave - either to steal the spotlight or to cover a blunder that might expose her secrets. Tell a GM what you want to occur.

Red Power – "The Show Must Go Wrong"(Once, in Act V only)

When everything collapses - truth exposed, ghosts revealed, lovers betrayed - Maggie can make it a finale. She steps into the wreckage, raises her arms, and turns it all into a performance. For one blazing moment, everyone on stage must respond to her as if she's delivering the last speech of the play - whether that means applause, confession, or chaos. In that heartbeat, she decides how her story ends: comedy, tragedy, or miracle. Then the light fades, and whatever mask she was wearing drops away for good. She still gets the final word!

Alan Moreby

*Rumpled, magnetic, and dangerously good company, Alan Moreby has a rakish charm. His father was the village vicar during the 1997 production and was widely rumoured to have been involved with the disappearance of Janine Davenham. Alan grew up in the shadow of that secret. He tried to follow in his father footsteps, but left theological college after what the diocese still refers to as "the incident in Winchester," and has since reinvented himself as Swinton's unofficial moral adviser, gin connoisseur, and man about town. He is rumoured to have had affairs with half the women in the village, but the truth is unknown; he never kisses and tells. **Sam Moreby** is his twin.*

Alan Moreby is one of those men who seem permanently mid-confession. Rumpled, magnetic, and radiating the weary charm of a man who's been forgiven too many times, he moves through Swinton like an unlicensed priest - dispensing bad advice and excellent gin in equal measure. He failed theological college, but is acting lay minister until a vicar can be found, and it's been five years, and with the Bishop of Barchester preoccupied with a trollop from the Barsetshire Chronicle, he may never be replaced. People trust him because he listens beautifully, and because, somewhere under the cynicism, he seems to care. He does, just not in any way that's good for you.

He's not quite clergy, not quite laity, and entirely unqualified for either. The Diocese keeps forgetting to replace him, and Alan has made no effort to remind them. The church runs on his particular form of blasphemous charm: services that sound more like cabaret, sermons that veer into stand-up, and confessions that end with two gin and tonics and a vague sense of absolution. He calls himself "interim," but Swinton calls him "Father Gin," a title he both despises and lives up to with unnerving regularity.

He was, once upon a time, meant for better things. Theology, perhaps. Faith. A reputation unsullied by scandal. But the Moreby name carries history - specifically, a long, damp trail of unquiet Davenhams and a father who dabbled in things best left in Latin. Alan carries it all with a shrug and a crooked smile, pretending he's stopped believing in ghosts, when in truth he's just learned to drink faster than they can talk.

Marianne

Alan grew up in the long, echoing shadow of his father, the Reverend Theodore Moreby who was the parish vicar during the notorious Romeo and Juliet of 1997, when Marianne Davenham vanished into legend and the storm. Some say she ran away with a lover; others whisper she never left Swinton Village at all. Alan was there that night, a lanky eighteen-year-old full of wine and bad poetry, and he remembers every detail he's spent twenty years pretending to forget.

He remembers his father in his study, muttering prayers that didn't sound Anglican. He remembers the lantern light under the church door, the shovel over his shoulder, the strange smell - wax, wet stone, and iron. And he remembers the silence afterward, when the rain stopped but something in the air never quite did.

Alan's convinced there's a hidden crypt beneath the altar at St Agatha's - older than the church, older than Swinton Village, older than Christianity. He's heard the hollow resonance when you walk across the chancel; he's felt the cool draft when the wind changes direction. He believes his father hid something down there: Marianne, killed in some dark occult ritual. Either way, the result was a haunting that has never entirely let go of the village - or the Morebys.

When the Reverend died, Alan and his cousin Tommy burned his notebooks. Or at least, that was the idea. They got through half before Tommy said, "Maybe keep one - for context." Alan has regretted that sentence ever since. The surviving book is full of sigils, cryptic Latin, and one line Alan can't stop rereading:



Alan Moreby

"Light must not die in the house of God. If she returns through shadow, the lamp will bear witness."

The Ghostlight

That was the night Alan remembered the ghostlight tradition in the hall. It's been burning ever since, a single glowing lie against the dark. While it burns all is safe, and Marianne rests in her secret tomb...

The Dagger, the Ghosts, and the Family Curse

Alan's family have a knack for collecting the wrong kind of relics. The Reverend's old prop cupboard still contained the bronze-handled stage dagger from the '97 production - sharp enough to nick an artery and elegant enough to look harmless. Chloe Grice borrowed it, muttering about "authenticity," and Alan let her, thinking nothing of it. Now there's a real blade on stage, a ghost in the lighting rig, and he's the only one who knows the whole story - or almost does.

His twin, Sam, has started seeing things again. They hear footsteps under the church, whisper Shakespeare in their sleep, and swear the voice sounds like Marianne's. Alan tries to joke it off - "It's just residual family guilt!" - but when he's alone in the vestry, he sometimes finds candle wax on his hands and can't remember how it got there.

Cousin Tommy, meanwhile, has reconnected the ghostlight to the church's power feed "to make it more stable." Alan doesn't dare ask what that means. He suspects his cousin's wired the haunting into the grid. That might explain the flickering. Or it might just be Swinton doing what Swinton always does - combining cheap electrics and moral decay.

Alan's Gin-Soaked Gospel

He plays the village's spiritual adviser now - the man you call when you need absolution, gossip, or an off-license recommendation. Half the women in Swinton claim to have confessed their sins to him; the other half wish they had. He never confirms or denies, only smiles that rakish smile and murmurs something about "the redemptive properties of juniper."

He flirts, but only to deflect questions. He drinks, but only to blur memories. He makes jokes about the supernatural because the truth is unbearable: he's terrified the ghosts are real, and worse - that they're his family's fault.

He wants redemption but fears he doesn't deserve it. He wants to protect Sam, expose whatever lies under St Agatha's, and finally face what his father did. He also wouldn't mind if everyone stopped calling him "Father Gin."

Every night he checks the ghostlight anyway. If it goes out, he believes Marianne's spirit will return - and this time, there won't be enough gin in Swinton to drown the truth.

Secrets He Keeps (and Shares)

He lent the real dagger to Chloe, and now the damned thing's back on stage. He'd rather die than admit it.

He believes his father murdered Marianne Davenham and buried her in the hidden crypt. But part of him suspects his father was trying to resurrect her corpse instead.

He and Sam burned the Reverend's journals but kept one - the one that mentioned "a light that must not die." Sam swore it was safe. Alan isn't so sure.

He thinks Sam's psychic sensitivity might be hereditary - that they're hearing the same voices his father once did. He sometimes wakes up in the graveyard with no memory of how he got there, but with dirt on his clothes.

He's seen the veiled woman near the ghostlight. Once, she whispered his name, with a feverish intensity and pointed a bony finger at him! Mariannes ghost, but he was so drunk he just stumbled out of the Hall and ran home.

Alan Moreby

Relationships

Sam Moreby – The Twin Flame Gone Dim

Sam is Alan's mirror and conscience, all poetry and fragility. Alan loves them fiercely but can't stop treating them like a child. He hides truths to "protect" them, not realising that's how family curses begin.

Tommy Moreby – The Rational Cousin

Tommy's the only one who's never flinched around the word "haunting." He's also the only person Alan trusts to keep the lights on - literally and metaphorically. Together they maintain the illusion of stability, but Tommy knows more about the crypt than he's telling.

Maggie Culshaw

Maggie and Alan share an emotional shorthand built on bad timing, laughter, and secrets better left in the dark. He's fond of her bravado and terrified by how much she reminds him of himself twenty years ago. They've been "almost something" for months. She suspects more about the dagger than she lets on.

Moira Grice

Alan and Moira Grice orbit one another like two guilty stars-too aware of their shared gravity to ever admit it aloud. They're both old enough to know better and lonely enough not to care. It started, as these things always do in Swinton, over parish gin and mutual exasperation: her sighing over the committee, him over theology. Now they meet under the pretence of moral support and talk about everything but what matters-the ghosts, the feud, the things their

families did to each other in the dark. There's something deliciously improper about it: two heirs to old scandals pretending they're simply friends who happen to linger too long by the vicarage window. When they touch, it's accidental. When they don't, it's deliberate. She smells faintly of lilac and cigarettes, and he hates himself for remembering the night his father came home with soil under his fingernails. Their flirtation is equal parts confession and penance, which suits them both perfectly.

Alan's Powers

 **Green Power (At Will):** "The Voice of Reasonable Vices" Alan can soothe any heated argument or panic by slipping into that calm, vicarial tone and offering a gin. It only works on people attracted to him (ask) and is mental first aid in essence, calming the stricken.

 **Amber Power (Once per Scene):** "Confession Hour" Alan can draw out a hidden truth or guilty secret from another player, using his priestly air and gin-soaked empathy. The other person must reveal something real - though not necessarily the whole truth. He must tell them in return a secret he knows, in his slightly vague manner. The two must be alone for this to work, and uninterrupted.

 **Red Power (Once, Act V Only):** "Light Must Not Die" Alan can intervene dramatically with the ghostlight. He may rekindle it, extinguish it, or cause it to flare with supernatural brilliance - revealing a hidden presence, truth, or ghost. But doing so will cost him something dear: memory, peace, or maybe even his life. Discuss with the GM.



Peter Barrow

Smooth, charming, and relentlessly reasonable, Peter Barrow is the man everyone in Swinton calls when something needs "sorting quietly." As Vice-Chair of the Village Hall Committee and heir to the Barrow family's modest local empire (plumbing, roofing, and land ownership), he's built a reputation for being helpful, patient, and disarmingly self-effacing. He brings flowers when things go wrong, mends leaks personally and makes the occasional witty speech about "community spirit." He exemplifies the best in Swinton Village, and is handsome, posh and well liked as well as respected.

There are villains, and then there is Peter Barrow - the kind of English scoundrel who never raises his voice or his heartbeat while quietly hollowing out an entire village. He wears guilt like good tailoring: neatly pressed, unassuming, and impossible to take off. The man everyone trusts, the one with the spare keys to everything, including your conscience. He can fix a roof, a lighting rig, or a scandal - though the results are rarely watertight. Married to the beautiful but rather dull Philomena Grice (away in the Algarve for a month practicing her tennis), he is the respectable heart of the village.

Once, long ago, Peter might have been a decent man. He was certainly a handsome one - the sort of clean, careful, practical type that made the Davenham sisters smile indulgently while calling him "dependable." The son of the scandalous Lady Evelyn by her first husband, the handsome racing driver, he built sets, fixed leaks, organised raffles, and thought himself the quiet custodian of order in a village addicted to chaos. Then came Marianne's disappearance in 1997, and something in him cracked - a thin seam of fear that widened, over time, into entitlement.

Now, thirty years later, Peter has perfected the art of appearing indispensable. He runs the Village Hall with the solemn air of a man protecting civilisation itself from entropy. Nobody asks who signs the cheques or where the money goes. That's what they have Peter for.

The Gentleman's Crimes

The Save St Agatha's Roof Fund has been his personal pension for years. A tenner here, fifty there - always with the best intentions. Then the "borrowings" became habit, and now the books are a masterpiece of rural deceit: a ballet of "miscellaneous expenses" and "urgent replacements," concealing a slow siphon of parish funds into his own pocket. Every damp wall, every collapsing prop, every half-lit rehearsal is, in truth, a monument to Peter's greed. The others blame ghosts; Peter knows better. Ghosts don't do invoices.

He tells himself it's only fair. He's worked harder than anyone, put in the hours, mopped the leaks, chaired the meetings. Surely a man deserves something back. The new car? "Necessary for parish errands." The watch? "A retirement gift - from himself, to himself." The moral rot runs deep, but always politely.

The Bank Job

And then came the discovery that made his blood sing again - your half sibling **Alex's** failed Halifax heist. **Maggie Culshaw** and Alex planned it, but only Alex went to prison and the money was never recovered. Peter has seen the panic in Maggie's eyes when anyone mentions Grimacre Wood. He's pieced it together: the stolen money, the late-night visits to the wood. He's certain it's still out there, waiting for a more responsible custodian - namely, him. He's already walked the perimeter once, pretending to check drainage, and plans to sneak out during opening night after fetching a torch and a spade. From Saint Agatha's. Maggie may not even notice it's gone; she never noticed her conscience slipping, after all. Or her missing friend when they went to prison and she didn't? Anyway there is more than enough money there to pay off his borrowings from the Village Hall funds.

The Ghostlight and the Mask

The irony, of course, is that Peter has become the very thing the others fear: a haunting. Not of the supernatural sort, but a living spectre of polite

Peter Barrow

corruption, a man doomed to wander from spreadsheet to spreadsheet, endlessly rebalancing his sins. When the ghostlight flickers, he feels it - a pulse of conscience, or perhaps approval from the void. Marianne's ghost, he likes to imagine, understands. She always said the show must go on, even if it meant lying through your teeth.

He drinks with Alan Moreby and talks theology without believing a word of it. He comforts Miriam Davenham with roses and rehearsed concern, knowing full well he's still in love with her missing sister. He trades gossip with Lady Evelyn over gin, fencing for dominance in sentences barbed with politeness. Everyone sees in Peter what they need: a father, a fixer, a friend. And Peter gives it freely - as long as they don't look too closely at the accounts.

Miriam Davenham is his respectable tragedy - a woman who makes repression look glamorous. Their almost-romance is his shield: an excuse for late nights and soft sighs. He brings her roses "for luck," then pockets her trust like another coin. What began as comfort has curdled into guilt, but Peter clings to it - a man who'd rather be pitied than ignored.

Alan Moreby is the only one who suspects him. They share drinks and ghosts, but Alan's eyes linger too long on the cracks in Peter's mask. Peter cultivates his friendship carefully, feeding him just enough confession to keep him sympathetic. If Alan ever guessed the full scale of the theft, Peter knows the vicar's son would come after him with prayer or proof - and he can't decide which would be worse.

Tommy Moreby is useful: practical, loyal, and blissfully uninterested in money. Peter keeps him close, often at the pub, steering him away from awkward questions about wiring invoices and power surges. He suspects Tommy knows about the altered accounts - but Tommy's the sort who believes everyone deserves a second chance. Peter, ever pragmatic, plans to take the first.

Maggie Culshaw fascinates him. She's what he might have been if he'd had less shame: brazen, guilty,

untamed. Her anxiety about the Old Barn is an open secret, and Peter plays the role of indulgent uncle, nodding sagely while filing away every slip she makes. He doesn't know where the Halifax money is buried, but he's certain she'll lead him to it sooner or later. All he needs to do is wait - and perhaps plant the idea that someone else is already digging, or go out there and search himself.

Nora Culshaw adores him, poor soul. She leaves him custard creams and hero-worship, and Peter rewards her with kind smiles and vague promises. It's cruel, and he knows it, but convenient - she's the perfect alibi for midnight visits to the hall. If he's caught, he's always "helping Nora with props."

Juliet Davenham and **Rosie Grice** are children playing with matches, and Peter has the water bucket. Their affair is sweet, reckless, and terribly exploitable. He tells himself he's protecting them from scandal; in truth, he enjoys the quiet thrill of knowing he owns their secret, and can blackmail them. The letter is already written in his head. He's just waiting for the right moment to send it, and to decide what payoff he wants for the Hall CCTV recordings. Of them snogging.

Lady Evelyn Barrow, his mother, is both his mirror and his nightmare - a creature of charm, vice, and theatrical self-preservation. She suspects something, though not what. They drink together like conspirators in a Restoration comedy, trading innuendo and moral philosophy until one of them wins. Usually, it's her.

The Ghost of Marianne

Peter doesn't believe in ghosts. Not officially, not the way Nora does. He believes in electrics, in damp, in substandard wiring. But that's the story he tells the committee and himself. Privately - late at night when he's alone in the hall - his certainty begins to flicker, just like the light he keeps fixing.

He was there the first time it happened - 1997, the night Marianne Davenham vanished. He was twenty-eight, when the storm came in. The ghostlight was



Peter Barrow

burning then, brand new, a safety bulb wired directly into the mains by Tommy's father. Marianne had made a joke about it: "A light for the ghosts of amateur dramatics past." She laughed, and Peter - in love with her then - promised it would never go out.

That night, after she disappeared, he found the lamp still burning but the plug scorched black. In the vestry he found the Reverend's lantern - dripping rainwater, smelling of candle wax and earth. He hid it, because what else could he do? Tell the police? Tell the bishop? He'd seen the vicar out in the graveyard that evening, talking to someone, and he'd been afraid of what he might find if he looked too closely.

Since then, Peter's been the unofficial custodian of the ghostlight. He's rewired it twice, replaced the bulb a dozen times, and kept it burning without fail. He tells people it's "for safety." The truth is, he's superstitious: he's convinced that if the light dies, whatever the Reverend bound beneath the church will wake up again. He doesn't know it's Marianne - he doesn't dare assume - but he can't shake the feeling that the light is her tether, her signal, her warning.

Every so often, something happens to unsettle his logic. Once, a faint humming - Greensleeves, her favourite tune - when he was locking up alone. Another time, a set of wet footprints leading from the stage door to the wings and vanishing beneath the lamp. He's told no one about those. He prefers to call them "condensation patterns."

The week before the blackout, things grew stranger. The chalk messages started: "Marianne. Prayers. Light candles." He assumed Nora or one of the Grices had written it as a prank - but the handwriting was elegant, looping, not the biro scrawl of a villager. It looked... educated. Familiar. He's seen something like it before, in a letter Marianne sent him the week before she vanished. He still keeps that letter, folded into a parish accounts folder marked 1997 - Miscellaneous Receipts.

And then came the sighting: Lady Evelyn shrieking that she'd seen "Marianne's ghost gliding across the stage, veiled, like a Vogue banshee." Peter found a chalk

footprint nearby - the same size, the same sole pattern as the old choir shoes they used to wear. He told himself it was vandals. He told everyone else the same. But that night he went home and dreamt of her walking through the rain with a candle in her hand.

When the storm hit on the dress rehearsal night and the power failed, he knew before anyone screamed that she'd be there. He heard the door slam open in the wind and saw the light go out. He found Miriam fainting in the corridor and a tall veiled woman by the light, trying to relight it. . When he reached her, she was gone - no footprints, just the lamp burning steadily again.

The Gentleman's Justifications

What makes Peter dangerous isn't malice, it's reasonableness. He's perfectly polite while ruining you. He'll say "I understand" while you hand him the noose. He doesn't think of himself as corrupt; he thinks of himself as necessary.

After all, he's the one who keeps the lights on (badly), the books balanced (creatively), and the ghosts contained (accidentally).

Powers

■ Green Power "The Pillar of the Community" Peter can disarm suspicion or end an argument with effortless authority. When he speaks, people listen - partly because they've learned it's quicker that way.

■ Amber Power - "Creative Accounting" Once per scene, Peter may claim he's already arranged, paid for, or authorised something - and, by the force of his certainty, make it seem real. He needs to spend a minute on his phone afterwards fixing things with his loan sharks.

● Red - "The Gentleman's Ledger" Once, in Act V, Peter may rewrite the truth to pin a single crime on a plausible person!

ALEX BARROW

Efficient, unflappable, and running entirely on black coffee and resentment, Alex Barrow is the one person standing between this production and total collapse. They know where every prop, costume, and body is buried -sometimes literally. A lifelong Swinton local, Alex has seen enough village drama to last several lifetimes and treats crises like stage cues: acknowledge, fix, move on. Everyone agrees that since their release from prison last year after serving six years for the unfortunate Halifax Building Society hold-up, they're "just like the old Alex again"-organized, punctual, and remarkably good with logistics under pressure.

Family

Alex Barrow grew up in Swinton, which is to say they were raised in a village that can turn a missing pair of secateurs into a generational feud and a production of Romeo and Juliet into something that looks suspiciously like a low-budget Scandinavian noir. Their mother, Lady Evelyn, has always been the gravitational centre of the Barrow family, a woman who glides through life as though the universe were her understudy and doing a very poor job of it. She was, in her youth, married to Sterling Bonds, Alex's father, who looked like he had stepped out of an advertisement for cigarettes, cocktails, or quietly dangerous men who live fast and never stay long.

Sterling's life was defined by speed -the cars, the risks, the way he leaned into corners as though the laws of physics were only advisory suggestions. His death, which occurred when Alex was twelve, was replayed on national television so many times that Alex began to feel they were being asked to memorise it for an exam. Lady Evelyn remarried with dignified haste, to Sir Percival Barrow, bringing her a title. Soon after the baby Peter Barrow competed the family and ensured that Alex's adolescence would be spent performing the unenviable emotional labour of explaining to teachers, vicars, and community officers that Peter was not "misunderstood," merely "Peter."

Peter, even as a teenager, had the singular gift of looking as though butter would not melt in his mouth while quietly helping himself to everyone's butter, spoons, and small change. Alex spent their formative years covering for him, mostly because no one else would, and partly because they were the kind of child who believed that doing the right thing might, eventually, lead to a quiet life. They have since revised that belief.

Maggie, Maggie, Maggie.. Out?

Alex had their own rebellious years, though theirs were conducted with far more caution and considerably less sparkle than Maggie Culshaw's. They'd met at a protest gig - Alex was doing a monologue about austerity dressed as Thatcher's ghost, and Alex was the one with the sound system and the smirk. They'd fallen into each other the way fire falls into petrol: fast, bright, and absolutely inevitable. For a while, it worked. They were Bonnie and Clyde on benefits, holding court at the Red Lion, finishing each others sentences, sharing cigarettes and schemes. The trouble was, neither of them could tell where the performance ended and the plan began.

In 2018, they found herself in the wrong kind of play: the Halifax Building Society Affair, as the tabloids later called it. Alex was the robber; Maggie was the getaway driver. "We're not stealing," Maggie had said. "We're reallocating funds."

The job was chaos from the start - a clown show with balaclavas. They ended up with more cash than conscience, and when the police came, Maggie bolted while Alex stayed. It wasn't bravery; it was bad timing. Alex shouted for her to run, and she did. The Halifax Building Society job -the defining catastrophe of 2018 -was a product of that era. Maggie had whispered an idea. Alex, whose judgement was at that time painfully entangled with loyalty, listened. The consequences were, as the newspapers put it, "dramatic."



ALEX BARROW

It all went wrong, as things around Maggie tend to. Alex got six years. Maggie walked free "for lack of evidence," though everyone in Swinton assumed she'd flirted her way out of prison time. They were half right. What no one knows is that she took the bag of cash and buried it herself - forty-six thousand

When the Halifax affair imploded, Maggie didn't walk free by luck or charm alone. Alex gave her an alibi - one that should never have held. They both told the police they'd been at the Red Lion that night, drinking gin and gossiping with Lady Evelyn's late husband, Sir Percival Barrow. It was plausible, and the police, dazzled by Maggie's tears and Evelyn's social connections, let it stand. Then, quite conveniently, Sir Percival died that very night - a heart attack, officially, though some say the shock of his wife's performance in "Oh! Calcutta!" led directly to it.

You knew the alibi is a ticking bomb. The times don't match, the witness is dead, and Evelyn's diary will show her husband was choking on his G&T at his wife's nude on stage antics in Soho, not in The Red Lion that night. Unfortunately distracted by the death of your stepfather your mother never blew a hole in Maggie's alibi; out of loyalty and knowing she'd got away with the cash you stayed silent. Forty six grand is more than you'd ever win on Deal or No Deal?

Alex served six years. Maggie did not. The money vanished into the woods. No one in Swinton has ever agreed on what Maggie meant to Alex, only that she left a bruise that time has not fully absorbed.

Tie a Yellow Ribbon

Returning to Swinton after prison was less a choice than the result of a probation officer insisting on "community reintegration." Alex tried to explain that Swinton is not a community but a collection of deranged lunatics, but the point did not land. And so Alex came home, dragging their past behind them

like a trunk of mismatched props, expecting to repair the lighting rig, keep their head down, and let the town's attention drift elsewhere. Unfortunately, Swinton never forgets a good scandal, and the Players had already begun rehearsing Romeo and Juliet...

Romeo & Juliet

Alex walked into the Village Hall expecting amateur theatre and found themselves in the middle of a six-threaded opera of disappearances, sabotage, family secrets, interpersonal melodrama, and what appears to be Swinton's latest haunting. The moment Alex entered the hall, Tommy greeted them with visible relief, Chloe greeted them with a breathless monologue about "creative risk," and Miriam greeted them as though they were either a blessing or an omen, the distinction being largely academic these days.

The first indication that something was wrong came on Bonfire Night when the director Janine vanished at the village Fireworks display. A couple of weeks later Alex found what was probably the murder weapon; the dagger, the real dagger, sitting in the props tray like a shark deciding whether to take up synchronized swimming. Alex knew instantly that Chloe Grice must have been involved - not because Chloe is malicious, but because she is exactly the sort of creative visionary who would replace a blunt prop with a lethal instrument for "aesthetic integrity," or murder a director who demands Royal Shakespeare Company over her Baz Luhrmann pop music neon soaked vision. Chloe was Assistant Director, she had a motive and shed planned her script, and then Miriam Davenham stepped in and replaced her dead sister as Director.

ALEX BARROW

That night, Alex nearly confronted her, but before they could, the ghostlight flickered, half the cast screamed, and Lady Evelyn insisted she had seen "a shimmering outline of a woman with opinions," which at least confirmed the spectral entity had a personality.

Vanishing Directors

Janine -who took over after Marianne vanished in 1997 -disappeared on Bonfire Night under circumstances that echo that earlier tragedy with almost insulting precision. Alex was a child during Marianne's disappearance, but their memory is sharper than most adults realise. They recall Peter slipping out from behind the flats looking sick, sweat prickling along his collar, muttering about a power failure. They recall Maggie standing too close to the wings, her face ghost-white. They recall Lady Evelyn insisting that nothing had happened at all, which was precisely when Alex learned that denial is often the loudest voice in a room.

As for the Rewritten Ending, Alex has already caught Chloe rewriting Act V to "alleviate emotional strain," a choice that makes Alex uneasy, because nothing in this production is being rewritten harmlessly. Someone has also been tampering with Tommy's lighting cues, wires have been moved, gels replaced, and an entire sequence of blackouts programmed behind Tommy's back, which suggests sabotage -clever, organised, and by someone who understands the building.

Bad Romance

Meanwhile, the Love Polygon seems to orbit Rosie, Juliet, Tony, Angel, and possibly half the cast; Alex wants no part of it except insofar as preventing it from ending in bloodshed. They

once caught Juliet crying quietly in the dressing room and responded with a tissue, a cup of tea, and a gently delivered reminder that real romance seldom involves dying at the end; a sentiment ruined by Alex's observation "unless one lives in Swinton Village."

Alex's connection with Norah Culshaw, their oldest and most loyal friend, is one of the few certainties they have. Norah knows Alex better than anyone - knew them before the Halifax disaster, visited them during their lowest days, and greeted their return with the quiet, fierce devotion of someone who cares without ceremony. Norah is convinced that the ghosts are stirring, that the spirits are restless because dishonesty has spread through the cast like mildew in a poorly ventilated rehearsal room. Alex, despite their scepticism, listens to Norah more closely than they ever admit.

Peter's behaviour, meanwhile, is the sort that only a guilty man or a very bad actor would produce, and Peter is a perfectly competent actor. He flinches whenever Marianne's name is mentioned, deflects any discussion of finances, and has recently been seen retrieving hidden envelopes from unlikely corners of the hall. Alex knows this behaviour. They have spent a lifetime cleaning it up.

And then there was the storm: the ghostlight incident, when everything plunged into darkness, someone screamed -not theatrically, but with a terror that cracked through the air like broken glass - and Alex saw a figure by the ghostlight, tall, veiled, shaking violently, trying to relight it with trembling hands. Miriam insists it was her dead aunt. Alex, who saw the cut of the poncho and the shape of the boots, does not agree.

Where is My Money?



ALEX BARROW

The primary problem though remains the missing money. Maggie Culshaw got away with £46,000: you are not greedy and will accept half. She just makes endless excuses. She hid it in a biscuit tin; its still in the village; she buried it and floods moved it. Even if she has spent it you won't actually kill her, because her mum (Norah) is your best friend, but you were betrayed horribly, and you need the cash to get out of Swinton Village before you wind up dead or back in prison.

ALEX'S POWERS

Alex possesses three talents, none of them magical, all of them unnervingly effective in a village as combustible as Swinton.

■ Amber Power – "Creative Accounting" Once per Act

The second is the peculiar instinct for detecting falsehood. Alex does not catch people in the act of lying so much as hear the lie vibrating under their words like the low hum of faulty electrics. Those who lie in Alex's presence tend to create a second, fresher lie on the spot, as though the first were insufficiently convincing and needed reinforcement. It is a gift born in prison, honed in childhood, and made sharper by disappointment. Ask if someone's last sentence spoken to you is a lie: tell them if they are they must make up an alternative, and equally untrue lie and speak that while looking flustered!

● Red – "They've Got A Shooter!" (in Act 5)

The third talent Alex uses sparingly, because it is so dangerous. They have the shotgun from the 1996 Halifax Building Society job, that they recently recovered from where Maggie hid it under the floorboards. It works exactly as you'd expect a shotgun to, double barrelled, and each of the two shots wide enough to cut three people down. Only two cartridges, but the threat should be enough?

Tony Culshaw

Fierce, dramatic, and gloriously extra, Tony Culshaw approaches Tybalt as a personal calling rather than a role. They move through rehearsals like a rock star trapped in a village-hall panto -dangerous, magnetic, and absolutely convinced this production could change British theatre forever. Their moods are legendary, but so is their loyalty -they'd fight to the death for their castmates... preferably in slow motion, under a strobe. Toni travels everywhere with a "combat emotional support ferret" called Balthasar, who allegedly "helps with line learning." No one's entirely sure if Balthasar exists or is just part of Tony's method.

A SHORT HISTORY OF A VERY REMARKABLE PERSON

If one were to ask anyone in Swinton to describe Tony Culshaw, the answers would range from "a menace" to "a joy" with several scenic detours in between, but almost all would agree that Tony operates at a frequency slightly higher than the rest of humankind, as though tuned to a station that ordinary radios cannot receive. Even as a child, Tony had a flair for the theatrical: the sort of child who, when asked to play an angel, would arrive with a leather jacket and an annotated script explaining why the role demanded a more tragic edge. Their primary school headmistress once wrote, on an end-of-year report, that Tony had "a gift for bringing dramatic scenes to life, especially those not previously recognised as dramatic scenes." It was meant kindly; it set a tone.

Growing up a Culshaw meant living in a household where feeling was not so much experienced as projected in several directions at once, and Tony fit the family mould perfectly. Maggie, brilliant and erratic, shone like a lantern in fog, while Norah moved with the steadiness of someone whose gravity was largely internal. Tony, meanwhile, conducted themselves as though preparing for a West End transfer at any moment, rehearsing death

scenes in the back garden, summoning relatives to watch monologues at suppertime, and once attempting to stage an immersive performance of King Lear on the Number 23 bus. The driver was not pleased; the passengers, divided.

Norah, who possesses the rare talent of loving someone without trying to fix them, understood Tony instinctively. She has always been the quiet harbour to which Tony returns after each emotional shipwreck -listening without judgement, offering tea rather than critique, and gently removing from Tony's hands any improvised weaponry they might have acquired during the day's rehearsals. Tony, in return, worships Norah with the unshakeable devotion of a medieval knight, albeit one whose armour is slightly sequinned and whose horse is occasionally late.

Balthasar

It was Norah who first introduced Tony to the creature known as Balthasar -whether ferret, familiar, hallucination, or a metaphor that has grown legs is a matter of ongoing debate. Balthasar is said to travel everywhere with Tony, perched on their shoulder or tucked into the inner pocket of a flamboyant coat, offering emotional support and, allegedly, assistance with line learning. Some swear they have seen him scampering along the lighting rig; others insist Tony is simply engaged in a form of deep method acting that involves imaginary mammals. Tony, when pressed, responds with a serene smile and the words, "Balthasar knows what Balthasar knows," which clarifies nothing and alarms everyone.

When the cast list for this year's Romeo and Juliet was posted, Tony discovered they had been chosen for Tybalt, and felt, with the certainty of a prophet discovering their true scriptures, that fate had finally honoured its contract. To play Tybalt is, for Tony, less a role and more a vocation. They



Tony Culshaw

approach every rehearsal as though the spirits of past tragedians hover above the stage with clipboards, ready to bestow approval. No one has had the heart -or foolhardy courage -to suggest to Tony that this is, technically, a village hall production.

Romeo & Juliet

The current production has, of course, dissolved into its customary chaos: vanishings, rewrites, supernatural sightings, and the hall's ancient wiring launching intermittent uprisings. Tony moves through it all like a flamingo among pigeons - graceful, perplexing, and startlingly capable of violence should the moment call for it. They have approached the unfolding disasters with the same operatic intensity they bring to Tybalt, convinced that the universe has conspired to create conditions under which their performance -if adequately witnessed -might change the trajectory of British theatre.

It is impossible to list all of Tony's entanglements without resorting to diagrams, but several threads stand out. His mother, for example, has convinced Tony that the production is haunted by the ghost of the director who vanished dramatically during the final scene of the 1997 Romeo & Juliet production here. Tony speaks of Marianne Davenham in the reverent tones normally reserved for tragic heroines, insisting that "her spirit is drawn to true artistry," which naturally means Tony feels personally responsible for her ghosts return. Balthasar and he have rehearsed scenes alone in the hall "for the ghost," which has unsettled Miriam the latest director profoundly. Poor woman! Her sister Janine was the director of this production, just as Marianne was in 1997; she too tragically vanished in smoke, at this years village Fireworks display. Such a wonderfully dramatic family!

The matter of the Rewritten Ending has become a duel of wills between Chloe and Miriam, who regards herself as custodian of Shakespeare's gift. Apparently Chloe has done a modern dress update and you would be totally up for that, as long as its not like Baz Luhrmann's 1996 version – amazing film, but Tony would have done it so much better.

Tony has strong opinions about the nobility of Tybalt's death -an event they believe should involve a dramatic pause, a musical cue only they can hear, and a lighting change so bold it could blind a deity. Miriam, by contrast, has suggested that the production "lean into subtlety," a suggestion that Tony has taken as a personal attack, and reduce his death to less than three minutes of agonised posturing? Amateur!

Is this a Dagger I see Before Me?

Then there is the missing dagger, a matter that Tony considers both an affront and an opportunity. When it became clear that a real dagger was being used as a prop, he was delighted - authenticity is everything. Then it had been swapped for a 'safer' prop, Tony marched around the hall with righteous authority and announced, "Tybalt is being robbed of his birthright." They suspect Chloe -understandably, since she did indeed have it in her hands -but also suspects Chloe's motives were artistic rather than malicious. Tony has resolved to retrieve the real blade, though what they intend to do with it is unclear and causes Alex the Stage Manager private concern.

The Village mess of jealous lovers is a subject Tony pretends to disdain. Romance, they insist, is for mortals. Yet they hover protectively around Juliet, advise Rosie on heartbreak as though dispensing ancient wisdom, offer Angel dramatic monologues on fidelity, and once delivered a lecture to Chloe Grice on the perils of loving a man who owns a boat. Chloe Nice has never as far as she know met a man who owns a boat; still the whole cast finds this very helpful,

Tony Culshaw

although none can entirely explain why.

Tony is also deeply, embarrassingly invested in the mystery of the Barn in Grimacre Wood, which has acquired a mythic quality in their mind. They have visited it twice at dusk (against all advice), sure that Balthasar wished to confer with the local spirits. They returned whispering that the wood "contains a great sorrow," a phrase that has since been adopted by three cast members seeking to impress others with their sensitivity.

But most dangerous of all is Tony's involvement with the Sabotager. They are convinced that someone is attempting to destroy the production from within. They have interrogated props, questioned the ghostlight, demanded alibis from lighting technicians, and attempted to commune with Balthasar for clues. Tony's loyalty to the cast is so intense that if they discover the saboteur, the resulting confrontation may require curtains, tarps, or the intervention of Norah with a biscuit tin.

Through all this, Tony maintains an extravagant loyalty to Stage Manager Alex, who can steady Tony with fewer words than one would expect. Tony trusts Alex without reservation - a fact Alex handles with equal parts fondness and dread. Tony, for their part, would kill for Alex, dramatically and with choreography.

Tony possesses a very specific kind of force, the sort that is not easily described without using metaphors involving weather patterns or show ponies. When tension floods a room - and in Swinton, tension is as reliable as the post - Tony can seize the moment with a sudden, radiant performance of self that startles everyone into silence. It is not wisdom so much as charisma weaponised: a flare of theatricality so overwhelming that it interrupts quarrels, redirects

panic, and forces the room into Tony's rhythm. Whether this is helpful depends on the situation, but it is always memorable.

■ AMBER POWER - "Ferret-Less Insight" Once per Act

Whether Balthasar exists or not, Tony certainly believes in him, and that belief lends Tony an unsettling sensitivity to emotional undercurrents. They stare into the middle distance, listening, communing (allegedly) with the furry whispers of a creature who may or may not be a psychological construct. Once per scene, Tony may look directly at a player and say: "Balthasar tells me you're hiding something..." The targeted player must immediately reveal: a secret, a fault, a guilty impulse, or a wildly implausible excuse they now have to commit to: their choice.

. ● RED POWER - "Tybalt Lives!"

In the final act, or whenever Tony dies in real life - not Tybalt - Tony unlocks a reserve of operatic fury so potent that reality itself becomes slightly malleable, as if unwilling to contradict them. This is the moment Tony has been rehearsing for since childhood: the glorious, impossible, absolutely inevitable resurrection of Tybalt as a dramatic force of nature. Tony may clutch their chest, stagger, and roar: "I rise for VENGEANCE!" For the remainder of the scene, Tony may: declare themselves immune to one attempt to "kill," "banish," or "silence" them. In addition, anyone who attacks Tony must do so in slow motion, narrating the attack as though it were being filmed for an vastly overly ambitious A level Media Studies project. Tony may still die at the end - but it will be magnificent and everyone will be traumatised by the beauty of it.



JULIET DAVENHAM

Beautiful, brittle, and born into tragedy, Juliet Davenham is the last of the cursed Davenhams -or so the village whispers. Her mother, Marianne, vanished during the 1997 production of Romeo & Juliet. Her aunt Janine, who raised her, disappeared three weeks ago on Bonfire Night. Now her surviving aunt Miriam insists "the show must go on," and Juliet finds herself cast in the very role that seems to haunt her bloodline. Juliet doesn't remember much of her mother, but sometimes she swears she catches her scent -lilac and cigarette smoke -in the wings. She dreams in stage directions, hears applause in empty rooms, and can't quite tell if she's becoming her mother or her character. The villagers call her "poor Juliet." They have no idea how dangerous she really is. She's graceful, magnetic, and utterly fearless on stage, but under the poise is a storm: a woman torn between playing the part and rewriting the ending. Maybe this performance is her chance to break the pattern -or maybe it's her turn to vanish.

If tragedy can be inherited, like bone structure or poor financial instincts, then Juliet Davenham is certainly its heir. She grew up understanding -without anyone ever saying it aloud -that she belonged to a family the village discussed in the same tone it used for sinkholes and legendary gales. People would watch her with soft, pitying eyes, the way one observes a candle near an open window. Her mother, Marianne, vanished during the 1997 production of Romeo and Juliet, disintegrating into history somewhere between the interval and her final scene. Juliet was too young to remember the details, but she has learned every contour of the story from the way adults inhale sharply when she enters a room.

After Marianne vanished, Juliet's upbringing fell to Janine -fierce, loyal, brittle Janine -who filled Juliet's life with strong tea, stern affection, and the unspoken belief that protecting Juliet from the stage was as essential as protecting her from fire. For years, Juliet

was steered towards safe hobbies (ballet, books, the recorder), safe friends, and safe futures. It might have worked, had the Davenham house not been so full of ghosts. Juliet often woke to the smell of lilac and cigarette smoke drifting from corridors that led nowhere; her childhood drawings frequently included silhouettes she swore she hadn't drawn, and she once told the school nurse that the applause she heard in empty rooms was "just mother practising."

When Juliet was fourteen, she found Janine crying in the pantry, staring at an old production photo of Marianne -smiling, luminous, blonde hair lit from behind like a halo. Juliet understood then that she did not merely resemble her mother; she haunted people in the same way.

And then came Bonfire Night three weeks ago, and Janine became the next chapter in the Davenham chronicle. She vanished during the storm, leaving behind a styrofoam cup of cooling tea and the sort of aching silence that presses on the walls. Miriam, the surviving aunt, insists the show must go on, and Juliet -who has spent eighteen years being protected from the stage -is suddenly cast as Juliet in the very play that stole two Davenhams.

The villagers call her "poor Juliet," which Juliet especially dislikes because she knows something they do not: she is not a victim. She is a Davenham, which means she feels fear the way others feel hunger -an inconvenience that cannot be allowed to interfere with the performance. Being in the play has trapped Juliet in the centre of six spiraling stories, each tugging on her with the intimacy of fate.

Her stepmother's disappearance is the one she refuses to discuss. Janine's disappearance is too close to the bone. Juliet insists -too quickly, too

JULIET DAVENHAM

brightly -that Janine simply "needed time." She maintains this lie with the brittle serenity of someone who is perfectly aware it is a lie. At night, though, Juliet returns to the house alone, drifting through the rooms as though hoping Janine will step from the shadows with a laugh and a scolding remark about being out late and that awful Grice girl.

The Affair of the Rewritten Ending unsettles Juliet in ways she cannot articulate. Chloe the Assistant Director constantly tinkers with Act V, altering lines, adding pauses, cutting deaths. Juliet sees the fear beneath it -the desperate belief that rewrites can somehow rewrite fate. Juliet, secretly, is tempted. If every Davenham must vanish after Act V, then perhaps altering the ending is a way of saving herself; yet she suspects the story will not be fooled so easily. Miriam is pure Royal Shakespeare Company; Chloe her Assistant is much more influenced by the Baz Luhrmann film; neither can agree and scripts by both are in circulation.

The matter of the Real Dagger strikes closer still. Juliet has seen the blade -the real blade -gleaming among the props like a promise someone intends to keep. Chloe swears she is innocent of any knowledge of it, which is the least convincing thing Chloe has ever said. Juliet cannot shake the sense that she is being invited into a tragedy with a script already written.

As for the 1997 Disappearance of her real Mother, Marianne, she has begun visiting the archive boxes under the stage. There, tucked among costumes, she found a photograph of her mother as a teenager, in nothing more dramatic than a 1972 school panto. Yet the feeling the photo gave her -recognition, longing, and a cold thread of fear -lingered for days.

Then there is the Love Polygon, which would be comic if it were not so knife-edged. Romeo (played by Sarah) flirts with the sleepy confidence of someone who hasn't realised she is accidentally breaking half the cast's hearts. Benvolio sighs in corners like a dying swan. Chloe is writing glitter-pen sonnets to Angel. Alan and Moira are entangled. Lady Evelyn and Tommy's whispered innuendoes intended for each other keep being broadcast over the PA system. But only one romance matters to Juliet.

Rosie Grice.

The balcony kiss that "just happened" during the power cut. The whispered good nights. The secret texts full of Shakespeare lines, half-jokes, half-pleas. The certainty Juliet feels whenever Rosie touches her wrist -a strange electric sense that for the first time in her life she might want something she is not destined to lose.

It is absurd, it is delicate, it is terrifyingly sincere on Juliet's part. But is it real to Rosie? Juliet Davenham has grown up with the family feud the way other children grow up with bedtime stories -told in hushed tones, embroidered with scandal, and always ending in someone storming out of the Red Lion. According to her surviving aunt, the Davenham-Grice hatred dates back to 1783, when Great-Great-Something Davenham accused a Grice of short-changing him at the bar; "And from that moment," Miriam likes to intone, "two households, both alike in indignity, have lived in mutual disgust." Juliet used to laugh at this -until she fell in love with Rosie Grice and realised the full absurdity of her inheritance. She quotes Shakespeare on it now, half-ironically, half pleadingly: "My only love sprung from my only hate... too early seen unknown, and known too late." Only in Swinton Village, she thinks,



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could an 18th-century argument about a half-pint of ale still be invoked as grounds to forbid a relationship. And only in Swinton could she find herself genuinely afraid that, for the first time in two centuries, the feud might actually matter -not because of the ghosts, or the ancient grudges, but because she's terrified that Rosie will choose her family's pride over her.

And then there is the sabotage, which Juliet suspects with the instinct of someone raised in a house where doom is just another breakfast guest. She has noticed the loosened railing backstage, the swapped props, the rewired lighting cues, and half seen a dim figure in the wings. She has not told Miriam. She has not told Rosie. She has, however, begun carrying her phone everywhere, screen brightness on low, just in case she needs to record something impossible.

Juliet's gifts are not mystical so much as inherited - the sharp instincts of a girl who grew up in the echo of two tragedies and learned to survive by understanding people before they spoke.

She knows she loves her family, even the ones who left, even the ones she cannot follow. And she knows that if the story demands another disappearance, she is determined -for the first time in her life -to choose her own ending.

JULIET'S POWERS

● The Davenham Charm (once per scene)

Juliet can smile — that soft, hesitant, luminous smile she inherited from the women who vanished before her — and for a moment everyone believes in her. Tempers cool. Feuds pause. Even the Grices soften, as though remembering a childhood before curses. It isn't magic; it's just Juliet making people want the world to be kind again.

● The Balcony Heart-Stopper (once per scene)

When Juliet speaks from the heart — even accidentally — everyone within earshot goes still, like she's stepped into her own spotlight. She can sway someone, redirect them, or stop them confessing something she isn't ready to hear. It's pure theatre, but the sort that leaks into reality when no one's looking.

● Juliet's Act V Escape Clause: Break the Pattern

Once in Act V, Juliet may renounce the Davenham legacy — but to do so, she must give up something real, in front of witnesses, in a way that cannot be undone.

What it does

By making a symbolic, painful, and very public sacrifice, Juliet breaks the supernatural inheritance tugging at her: the vanishings, the reflections, the sense of being dragged into Marianne's footsteps. This is the only way she gets to step out of the story that has been telling her.

When she invokes Break the Pattern:

Any curse, expectation, or prophecy tied to her bloodline loses its hold on her personally, even if it still haunts the village or others.

Any NPC who was counting on her to "fulfil the role" (director, aunt, ghost, conspirator) must immediately change tactics — she's no longer the predictable Davenham marionette.

Rosie Grice

Dazzling, impulsive, and utterly incapable of doing anything halfway, Rosie Grice is the living embodiment of "all in." The Grice–Davenham feud runs through her blood like cheap prosecco, but she wears it with defiant pride. When she loves, she loves; when she fights, it's headline news. Rosie genuinely believes the stage is her destiny -or at least the best available substitute for therapy. She treats Romeo as a method role, quoting Shakespeare in Tesco and practising death scenes on the bus. The townsfolk find her exhausting and irresistible in equal measure. Think: Fleabag doing Romeo in a cider advert, pure heart and pure drama -a whirlwind of joy, danger, and lipstick-stained scripts. Her mother is Moira Grice.

"Love me or mock me, but don't ask me to calm down."

Rosie Grice burns at both ends. She is dazzling, impulsive, too loud for the village and not remotely sorry. She treats real life as rehearsal and rehearsal as revelation. To some she is incandescent; to others she is exhausting; to herself she is simply a woman who feels everything at theatrical volume. Romeo is not a role for Rosie -it's a diagnosis.

She grew up inside the Grice mythology: the family that froths at the mention of the Davenhams, the family that has spent two centuries retelling a story about a shorted half-pint as if it were the Siege of Troy. Her mother, Moira, recites the feud like a catechism; Rosie used to roll her eyes at it, until Juliet Davenham walked into rehearsal looking like heartbreak and poetry combined. Then suddenly the feud stopped being a running joke and became the ludicrous, immovable obstacle of her life.

Now every time Miriam Davenham looks at Rosie with that tight little smile -the one that says "not you, not with my niece"-Rosie feels like she's stepped into the wrong Shakespeare play. "Here's much to do with hate, but more with love," she mutters, half in protest, half in hope.

But she can't stop. She's already in too deep. And Juliet keeps saying her lines as if she means them.

The Grice–Davenham Feud

The feud has always been a family pantomime -wigs, scandal, grievance rehearsed so often it lost all meaning. Rosie has grown up hearing it recited at Christmas like sacred scripture: It begins with the Great Grice Underpayment of 1783, then the pork-pie incident of 1897 ("she knows what she did"), the ill-fated romance of two great-aunts who only managed three secret meetings and a stolen kiss behind St Agatha's before being separated "for propriety." Rosie used to laugh at it.

Now she sees how childish it is -except it is suddenly, painfully, real. Because now the feud is not about the past. It is about Juliet.

And when Juliet blushes and says "Good night... good night...", Rosie feels the entire feud breathing down the back of her neck like an elderly aunt at a wedding.

Rosie still remembers the 1997 tragedy -everyone does -though she was a child clutching Moira's skirt at the vigil in Swinton Hall. Marianne Davenham vanished mid-production; the adults whispered about ghosts and guilt; Moira swore the Grices were being framed.

Now, with Janine gone too, Rosie is terrified history is repeating itself -that Juliet, already fragile from loss, will be next.

Rosie once followed Juliet into the wings during a break and swore she saw a pale, veiled figure behind the flats. She told everyone it was Lady Evelyn rehearsing a costume change, but she hasn't actually slept properly since.

The Ghostlight

Rosie believes half of the ghostlight legends and laughs at the other half. She quotes Shakespeare at it like an exorcism.



Rosie Grice

She secretly worries Juliet is being haunted by something -or someone -and has started guarding the ghostlight whenever Juliet is nearby, as if her presence alone might keep ghosts, grief, and bad wiring at bay. Rosie has been sneaking out after rehearsal to meet Juliet by the pond -the one with the rumours about Marianne's reflection appearing on moonlit nights.

Rosie believes she once saw a second reflection behind Juliet. She pretends it was a duck. There were no ducks.

She is also the one who found Nora's biro scrawl ("Let the poor soul go!") and theatrically fainted onto a chair, claiming she smelled lilies.

The Real Dagger

Rosie grabbed the dagger during an argument with Chloe about balcony-blocking and immediately declared:

"THIS is why Mercutio dies, because no one checks the props!"

She knows someone swapped it deliberately, and she absolutely intends to find out who. She is convinced it was Chloe -"because anyone that obsessed with glitter has darkness in them."

Romance

Rosie is the emotional epicentre of the romantic chaos and remains blissfully unaware of half the mess she causes. Rosie thinks Juliet is just acting, but Rosies feelings are real. Benvolio keeps looking at Rosie like a Victorian poet dying of unrequited longing. Rosie interprets this as friendship. Everyone else interprets it as a tragedy in progress.

Moira Grice (Mother):

Rosie loves her mother but suspects Moira has turned the family feud into her own personal Greek tragedy. Moira believes Juliet will break Rosie's heart, or curse her, or drag her into a crypt. Rosie believes Moira needs some fresh air. She also knows

Moira lied to the police in 1997 about where she was when Marianne vanished -but Rosie has never dared ask why.

Tony Culshaw

Rosie adores Tony's flamboyance and treats him as her personal chorus. They support each other in the way only two chaotic born theatre kids can.

Maggie Culshaw

Rosie worships Maggie like an unstable deity. Maggie has given her terrible advice that Rosie treasures. She knows Maggie once drunkenly whispered she'd buried something in Grimacre Wood, but assumes it was Maggie's dignity.

Where my Motivation?

Rosie wants:

Juliet, in all her bright tragic beauty. The show to succeed and be scandalous. To unravel the ghost story before it hurts Juliet. To stop the family feud from destroying her relationship. To be the best Romeo Swinton has ever seen (or survived).

She will kiss Juliet in front of the entire cast if that's what it takes to prove herself. She will fight anyone who threatens Juliet -including ghosts, mothers, electricians, and tradition.

Rosie's Powers

These are in keeping with her personality: dramatic, bold, unstoppable.

● Green Power -"Star-Cross'd Momentum"(Once per Act)

Rosie may escalate ANY emotional scene into heightened Shakespearean drama, forcing *everyone present into a melodramatic mode for 30 seconds. Great for declarations, arguments, or dramatic exits.*

Rosie Grice

● Amber Power - "But Soft!" (Once per Act)

Rosie can interrupt any heated confrontation by physically or emotionally stepping between two characters and cooling them down or redirecting their attention to her. Works even on feuding parents and suspicious stage managers.

● Red Power - "I Defy You, Stars!" (Act Five Only)

Rosie may make one grand, reckless gesture that overrides the outcome of a scene: a public confession, a dramatic kiss, a spotlight-stealing speech, or a bold reveal that forces a turning point. She cannot control the consequences - only the moment.





Angel

Leather-jacketed, Bristol accent, early twenties with a "why am I here" attitude. Sent by the Hippodrome's outreach scheme to bring "community outreach" and "professional attitude" to Swinton Village Players and already regretting it. Smart, sarcastic, perpetually clutching a clipboard or a half-empty coffee. Would rather be at Glastonbury than refereeing middle-aged drama queens but secretly wants the show to succeed. Think: young arts administrator dropped into Midsomer Murders. Works as usher/barperson/source of funding/owner of show.

Angel arrived in Swinton believing, with that touching innocence only possessed by people who have never run a rural community project, that they had taken a harmless job. A safe job. A soft-edged Arts Council outreach placement with the sort of village where the most dangerous thing is an over-ambitious WI chutney. They imagined afternoons spent coaxing pensioners into papier-mâché masks, possibly a mindfulness workshop about "finding your truth," followed by a quiet drink in a pub where somebody's Labrador was always asleep under the table.

Instead, they arrived in Swinton Village Hall, which is less a building and more a living organism composed entirely of bad decisions, flickering bulbs, unresolved ancestral grudges, and a faint smell of damp wicker. Angel took one step inside and thought, with absolute clarity: I am going to die here, and my manager will put it down as professional development.

Nothing in their induction training covered this. There was no module on multiple disappearances,

no section on 200-year-old vendettas, no practical exercise in evading accidental exorcisms conducted with Poundland candles. Angel encountered Maggie Culshaw almost immediately and was nearly swept into a sort of conversational riptide; they met Nora Culshaw and were invited to join a séance before they'd even found the toilets; and then someone casually mentioned that the previous director had vanished on Bonfire Night.

Angel blinked. "Vanished vanished?"; "Oh yes," said Maggie cheerfully, "murdered they say; but don't worry, the play's not as cursed anymore. Her sister was murdered in 1997, and buried under the bus stop." Angel has not slept properly since.

And yet -and this is the misery of it -the worst, most destabilising, most heart-thumping problem in Angel's life is not the ghost, nor the ghostlight, nor the whispered rumours of "that business in '97."

No. It is the secret Angel carries alone:

Tonight, Russell T. Thyme -Executive Producer of Doctor Who -will be sitting in the audience.

Angel discovered this by accident. A harried BBC assistant rang Angel's mobile three weeks ago, muttering about "regional talent scouting" and "we've got high hopes for the nonbinary one -just don't tell the locals." Since then, Angel has been living in a state of transcendent panic. They want the role more than they have ever wanted anything. They have practised their regeneration pose alone in their B&B bathroom. They have a speech prepared - a luminous, trembling monologue about hope, time, and the small courage of ordinary people -which they absolutely refuse to deliver unless they faint

Angel

from stress and accidentally say it while semi-conscious.

Nobody knows. Not even Lady Evelyn!

Especially not Lady Evelyn, who would explode like an over-filled hot-water bottle of pure ambition if she suspected.

Meanwhile, every waking second in this hall has been a battle for literal survival: avoiding the PA system (which shocks), dodging the ghostlight (which flickers ominously when Angel walks by), and attempting to appease actors who behave like migrating seabirds - unpredictable, loud, and oddly violent in groups.

Angel saw the ghost first. Not clearly -never clearly -but enough: a tall, veiled figure drifting near the wings at quarter past ten, barefoot, carrying the exhausted dignity of someone who has been haunting a village since 1997. Angel screamed. A proper scream, the kind that begins in the spine and exits through the soul. Then, out of pure politeness, Angel apologised to the ghost for screaming.

Since that night Angel has refused to walk through the hall alone. Unfortunately, this is Swinton, where no good deed goes unpunished: Nora Culshaw immediately interpreted Angel's fear as psychic sensitivity and recruited them for a midnight "release ritual" involving burning sage, chanting and candles that nearly set fire to the blackout curtain. Angel went along because they are too kind and too tired to refuse anything anymore.

Angel now privately believes that the play is cursed, the hall is haunted, the ghostlight is the only thing keeping the building from swallowing them whole, and the entire village is caught in some folkloric feedback loop where tragedy reproduces like mould in cold weather.

They might actually be correct about only one of these things, which in Swinton makes them the sanest person present.

The dagger plot is worse. Angel saw Chloe Grice swapping props the night the real blade turned up. They didn't understand it -Angel assumes anyone more confident than they are must be doing something profound -so they thought Chloe was exploring "texture" or "the semiotics of shine." But they remember the way Chloe froze when someone made a joke about a real knife, and they remember the tiny smear of something dark and alarming on the bag she carried. Angel hasn't told anyone. Angel assumes they're mistaken about everything. It is the curse of the gentle-hearted.

The two competing scripts -Miriam's solemn, RSC-approved Shakespeare and Chloe's glitter-soaked Luhrmann fever dream -have become Angel's personal purgatory. Everyone keeps asking Angel for their opinion. Angel's opinion is: please, let the lighting desk catch fire so I don't have to choose between you. They live in terror of being asked to resolve artistic differences. They are not strong enough. Not after watching Moira Grice pronounce Juliet's name like a hex, or Miriam glare at Rosie Grice as though defending the Church of England from a sudden rash of witchcraft!



Angel

Angel thought the Grice–Davenham feud was metaphorical. Perhaps a dispute over allotment boundaries. Perhaps a polite rivalry between bellringing teams. Then Angel saw the looks exchanged at rehearsals -the ancient, marrow-deep hostility -and realised: this feud predates antibiotics. There are Roman trenches with less history.

Angel, who comes from a perfectly ordinary Bristol family whose only scandal was accidentally stealing the neighbour's lawnmower for three months, is horrified. They have stopped asking questions. Whenever someone mentions "the dreadful business in '97," Angel nods respectfully and looks at the floor in case the spirits are listening.

And through this maelstrom floats Chloe, blazing like a small, dangerous star. Chloe talks to Angel with such fire and sincerity that Angel becomes faintly dizzy. Chloe touches their arm constantly. Chloe leaves glittered lattes addressed to "My Muse." Angel worries for Chloe. They care for Chloe. They would absolutely die for Chloe. They simply haven't realised that's what love is.

So Angel's inner emotional weather is now: 40% panic; 30% creative crisis; 20% fear of Russell T. Thyme; 10% confusion about Chloe's coffee cups

And deep beneath it all, a quiet, impossible longing: they want to be the Doctor.

There is something in Angel -something bright and sharp and tender -that understands the Doctor more than most people ever could. They know what it is to be an outsider. To walk into chaos and try, desperately, to make the world a little less

frightening. To fight darkness not with a sword but with kindness.

If Russell T. Thyme sees that -really sees it -Angel might just have a chance. They are terrified of that chance. They are equally terrified of losing it.

And yet, tonight, when the house lights dim and the ghostlight flickers in warning, Angel will step forward -not as an actor, not even as a cultural outreach officer, but as themselves -small, sincere, luminous with fear and hope, if there is any justice in the universe, Russell T. Thyme will see not just a nervous Arts Council worker in an ill-fitting jumper.

He will see a Doctor waiting for a cue...

● The Doctor Will See You Now (Red Power - once in Act V)

When your moment comes, in ACT V, Angel takes the stage. What emerges is a speech -the kind of accidental, heart-shaking monologue that would win Baftas if anyone were filming. Something between a regeneration scene and a quiet prayer, spoken with trembling hands and too much sincerity for a place like Swinton.

Everyone must listen. Everyone must bear the truth in it.

And afterward, no one will ever look at Angel quite the same way again.



Sam Moreby

Bright, expressive, and walking a fine line between hope and collapse, Sam Moreby is the village's resident dreamer; and possibly its most tragic soul. They grew up in Swinton, left to "find themselves," and then somehow found themselves right back here, living above the old post office with a collection of dying houseplants and an unfinished screenplay called Ghostlight. They're the one person who feels the strange energy in the hall: the flicker in the lights, the sudden chill near the trapdoor -- and they are convinced it's trying to tell them something. Sam is slowly unravelling in the most beautiful way imaginable. They quote Shakespeare, Bowie, and Tumblr with equal sincerity; they're impossible not to love and impossible to save. (Think Tilda Swinton in Orlando). Alan Moreby is your twin, and the same scandal shaped you.

Sam Moreby has the kind of face that looks permanently illuminated by some inner, unshared prophecy. Bright, expressive, and forever on the edge of tears or transcendence (it's 50/50 which), Sam is Swinton's resident dreamer -and perhaps its most heartbreakingly doomed romantic. They grew up here, under the same leaky roofs and whispered scandals as Alan. They fled in their teens to "find themselves," only to discover themselves back in Swinton ten years later with two half-finished degrees, a suitcase full of scarves, and an unfinished screenplay called *Ghostlight*.

They live alone above the old post office with an assortment of dying houseplants whom Sam speaks to tenderly, as though apology might revive them. A kettle, a typewriter, a single good coat: that is Sam's kingdom. And yet they walk into the hall each night with the aura of someone destined for something -glory or ruin, depending on which way the ghostlight flickers.

Sam feels the strangeness in the hall more acutely than anyone. They hear the whispers in the rafters. They see the shape in the wings before anyone else notices the chill. They stand by the trapdoor and swear they can hear -faintly, rhythmically -someone tapping back.

Sam tells people the building is "speaking." Maggie calls it melodrama. Nora calls it psychic sensitivity. Alan, their twin, says absolutely nothing -which tells Sam everything.

Sam and Alan have always been like two halves of a legend: Alan the fallen cleric, Sam the would-be mystic. They share the same scandal-shaped childhood -that terrible night in 1997 when their father, the village vicar, was somehow involved in Marianne Davenham's disappearance. Sam remembers the way he came home: drenched, shaking, muttering prayers that did not sound like the sort preached on Sundays. Alan coped with whisky and theology. Sam coped by writing. By dreaming. By breaking into a million luminous pieces and rearranging themselves into someone stranger and more fragile. Did your father the reverend murder Marianne? Your mother was already frail with the illness that took her life months later, and your father had taken to spending a great deal of time alone in the church, drinking. You suspect Alan knows more - but he has never told you. Sam has always suspected there is a truth Alan will never tell. And so the twins orbit each other, a little cracked, a little holy, sharing a grief they never name.

Sam and the Ghostlight

The ghostlight speaks to Sam. This is not metaphorical. Sometimes Sam catches a phrase -a half-formed murmur in the hum of the old bulb,

Sam Moreby

like a woman rehearsing from far, far off. They swear the flicker pulses in iambic pentameter. They write down the rhythms, convinced it must be Marianne's voice trying to push through the static.

Sam's screenplay *Ghostlight* is based entirely on these impressions: a tragic, looping love story about a village that tears itself apart and a spirit who refuses to leave until she's seen justice. It's wildly derivative, embarrassingly earnest, and possibly prophetic. (The player can invent details of the split as they see fit!)

One night Sam arrived early and saw -not clearly, but enough -a veiled woman drifting through the wings. Sam gasped, whispered "Oh, it's you," and the figure froze. Sam insists she answered. That she said Sam's name.

No one believes them.

Sam isn't sure they believe themselves.

Sam and Juliet / Romeo / Everyone

Sam is the only person who has noticed the full tragic sweep of Juliet and Rosie's clandestine balcony rehearsals. Sam overheard Juliet murmuring "good night" with a sincerity that made Sam ache with second-hand yearning.

Sam believes in love the way other people believe in gravity: absolutely, theatrically, fatally. They want to help the young lovers. They want to shield Romeo from heartbreak. They want to walk into scenes sighing poetic warnings about destiny. Sam is dying for someone who will never love them back.

It might be Romeo. It might be Juliet. It might be

literally anyone who remembers their birthday. | They are in love with love, and seek passion. Romeo is their true love, safely besotted with Juliet...

Sam and Chloe / Angel

Sam adores Angel -but not romantically. Angel is what Sam wishes they were: centred, kind, slightly luminous. Sam believes Angel is haunted by a destiny greater than Swinton, and Sam is absolutely right.

Chloe terrifies Sam. Not because she's cruel -but because she is blindingly sincere. Chloe once told Sam, "Art requires sacrifice," and Sam immediately hid the scissors. Sam has seen Chloe behaving strangely around props. Sam doesn't trust the dagger situation. Sam intends to investigate but keeps getting distracted by existential dread.

Sam and the Feud

The Grice-Davenham feud is Shakespearean to Sam, but not in the way Maggie means. Sam sees it as this vast, sticky, emotional inheritance -a curse laid across the whole village. They have read the parish records. They've written a chapter about it in *Ghostlight*. They weep when Rosie and Juliet accidentally brush hands during warm-ups.

Sam believes the feud can be broken with love.

Sam is, tragically, exactly the kind of person who gets murdered in Act III of their own life.

Sam and the Disappearances

Sam was one of the last people to see Janine on Bonfire Night. They were standing near the hot dog stand when Janine disappeared into the storm



Sam Moreby

with a woman, the two arguing fiercely. She only saw it in flashes of rocket bursts through smoke and rain, so she can't say who it was, but it looked intense. Sam assumed at first it was Nora -then realised Nora was beside them asking for mustard. Sam has not slept properly since that night, when poor Janine was murdered.

The Hall

Sam knows there is something wrong with the electrics -but that there is something even more wrong with the way Peter watches the ghostlight. Sam has caught Peter checking the trapdoor at night, whispering "Not again," as though history is a living thing that might break through the floorboards.

Sam once found a scrap of an old sermon in Alan's handwriting: "Light must not die in the house of God. If she returns through shadow, the lamp will bear witness." When your brother saw you looking at it, Alan snatched it away. You had already taken a photo of it though.

Sam believes the ghost is Marianne. Sam also believes the ghost is Janine. Sam also believes the ghost might be themselves in thirty years. Sam is open to possibilities..

SAM'S POWERS

● Green - "The Visionary's Glimmer"

Sam can, at any moment, say something so poetic, so unnervingly apt, that everyone in the room stops and reconsiders reality. They don't do this on purpose. It simply happens, like weather.

● Amber - "Second Sight, Third Mistake" (once per scene)

Sam gets one moment per scene where they sense something true -not correct, but true - about a person, object, or haunting. Their intuition is emotionally accurate but factually disastrous.

● Red - "Ghostlight Revelation" (Act V only)

At the climax, Sam's connection to the ghostlight surges. They will speak a line -their line, the one they've been writing their whole life -and the ghost, the truth, or the lie someone most fears will answer.

Photo of the entry in your father's handwriting





MARK HADES

Mark Hades arrived in Swinton with the weary professionalism of a man who has investigated far too many murders and attended far too many village fêtes for a London officer of his rank. Scotland Yard had sent him to look into the cold case of Marianne Davenham -missing, presumed dead since 1997 -and the fresh disappearance of her sister Janine three weeks ago. "Local matter,"his Superintendent had said. "Just tie up the loose ends."Except loose ends in Swinton behave like live wires, humming with old grudges, unanswered questions, and a general atmosphere of scenic malevolence.

Mark is, in fact, the only person in Swinton who suspects the Davenham cases involve actual homicide. Everyone else has opted for ghosts, curses, family curses, vengeful spirits, karmic echoes, or "whatever Nora sensed in the wings last Monday."Mark does not believe in ghosts. Mark believes in cause and effect, in motive and opportunity, in the banal brutality of human nature. Unfortunately, Swinton is determined to challenge him on every one of these points.

What complicates his task -and what he must not breathe a word of -is the presence of his cousin Russell. Russell T. Thyme, Executive Producer of Doctor Who, enfant terrible of the BBC drama department, known across London for his dangerous combination of charm, panic, and creative megalomania. Russell called Mark three days ago in a whisper -Russell believes whispers are more confidential -and announced he would be in the audience tonight. Secretly. Stealthily. Hunting for his new Doctor. "It absolutely must not get out,"he told Mark. "If the public discovers I'm casting in a village hall, they'll burn me alive."Mark agreed to keep the cover intact.

he must discreetly keep an eye out for the BBC's most over-caffeinated monarch, investigate a twenty-eight-year-old cold case in a village with the moral architecture of a Greek tragedy, and prevent the cast from murdering one another in front of a television executive. He knows, with perfect clarity, that he will be able to retire early if he survives this.

The suspects line up in Mark's mind like poorly rehearsed chorus members. **Alex Barrow**, freshly released from prison after the Halifax job, calm to the point of chilling. Alex is one of those unsettlingly composed individuals who could either be innocent or a genius-level sociopath. Mark senses shadows in Alex's history -not least the odd gravitational pull they exert on **Maggie Culshaw**, who nearly joined them in prison but escaped conviction through a combination of theatrical tears, local sympathy, and a judge who had clearly lost the will to live by page 97 of her statement. Maggie remains high on Mark's list of "accidental murderers who genuinely believe they were helping."She has the intensity of someone who has made questionable choices before and would happily make them again

But as in all tragedies, the deeper suspects are the quieter ones. Peter Barrow, older half-brother to Alex -the man who flinches every time someone says "1997"or "Marianner"-fascinates Mark. The man carries guilt like a backpack of wet sand. Something in Peter's gaze suggests he has already imagined himself in the dock and found himself wanting. Mark's experience tells him that a man with that much quiet shame has one of two histories: cowardice or complicity.

Mark's notebook, smuggled in under the cover of a play programme, is filling rapidly. He has tried to interview Lady Evelyn Barrow twice on arrival and failed both times, as she mistook him first for a Telegraph reviewer and then for an electrician. Both

MARK HADES

interactions were equally hostile.

What troubles Mark most is the ghostlight incident. He has been in the hall alone only twice, and both times the ghostlight flickered in a way that felt almost intentional -two slow pulses, then a drop in temperature sharp enough to raise every hair on the back of his neck. The first time, he dismissed it as faulty wiring. The second time, he saw -or believes he saw -a veiled, barefoot shape passing between the flats. He turned instantly, but the figure had gone. Mark now believes in drafts. Only drafts. And possibly smoke haze from the last production. And yet he glances at the wings when he thinks no one is watching.

His cover story is that he's "just here to enjoy the show,"but Swinton villagers devour outsiders. Nora tried to read his aura within five minutes of arrival. Maggie keeps trying to cast him as Mercutio's ghost. Angel, pale with nerves, asked him quietly whether Russell preferred the David Tennant regeneration to the Matt Smith one. What does she know? And Lady Evelyn demanded to know why he had not worn a dinner jacket, as "the BBC expects standards."Then you realise - you look like your cousin, Russell T. Thyme. They believe you are here to cast for Doctor Who, and have no idea you are a Scotland Yard detective...

If Mark can escape this building alive, he will file the experience under "occupational hazards,"alongside that time an escaped emu bit his sergeant.Mark understands now why retired inspectors take to gardening. Plants cannot lie. Plants do not attempt séances. Plants never mistake you for a Telegraph reviewer. Swinton is a knot of deceit and grief, of theatrical superstition and genuine dread, of secrets older than the ghostlight itself -and every one of them is determined to erupt before the curtain falls.

The irony, of course, is that the BBC -that bastion of

televised nonsense -may unintentionally trigger an actual village crisis if the cast discovers one of them might be the next Doctor. "Motive,"Mark writes in his notebook, "may not always be financial. For some, fame is enough."

He closes the notebook and looks out at the stage. A storm is blowing in. The ghostlight flickers like a nervous heartbeat. From the corridor, someone screams. It is, Mark thinks, going to be a long night.

● Green -The Detective's Stare (once per Act)

Mark can, by sheer force of personality, make someone blurt out far more information than they intended. Often irrelevant, sometimes incriminating, always entertaining. They simply say the thing on their mind, with no need to explain. "Green kidneys!"

● Red -The Murderer Is In This Room (Act V only)

When the final crisis hits, Mark may declare a full dramatic accusation. It doesn't matter whether he's right -the declaration itself forces secrets into the open. Someone will crack. Someone always cracks. He may then make arrests, as the law dictates!



PROPS & NOTICES

Recent Events in Swinton Village

Events from 5 November (Bonfire Night) to 20 November (Opening Night)

(This is the common knowledge of Swinton Village.)

5 November – Bonfire Night

The annual village bonfire and fireworks display took place on the Green.

Weather: windy, wet, and smoky — typical for Swinton.

During the event: Janine Davenham, the director of this year's *Romeo & Juliet*, was seen moving between the hot-dog stand and bonfire area. Several cast and locals spoke to her shortly before she disappeared into the crowd and smoke. Janine did not return home. Her disappearance is still under police investigation, though no evidence of foul play has been found.

Local woman vanishes at firework display

Janine Davenham, aged 48, was last seen at the village display on the night of 5th December



The last known photo shows her eating a hot dog by the bonfire.

Search parties on the 6th and 7th found no trace.

With Janine missing, her sister Miriam Davenham stepped in as director. Chloe Grice, Assistant Director was notably upset at this.

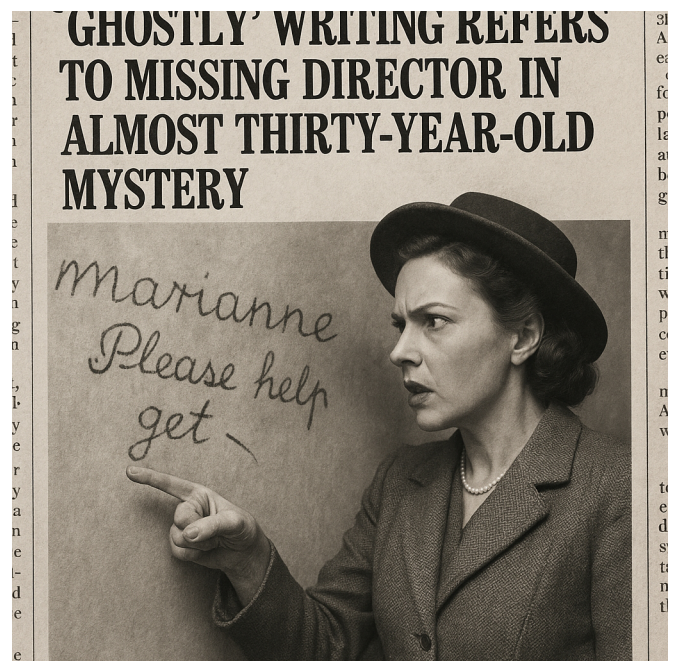
6–10 November – Rehearsals Resume

Rehearsals continued in the Village Hall with adjustments:

Some cast mentioned the ghostlight (the old safety lamp left burning on stage) flickering more than usual.

A handful of people reported footsteps after hours in the hall, a cold draft near the wings, or the fleeting impression of someone standing on stage. None of this was confirmed, and most assume nerves, stress, or tiredness.

Around this time, chalk messages such as “Marianne” and “Light candles” were found on backstage flats. These were cleaned off. No culprit identified.



11–14 November – Prop & Technical Oddities

A real dagger was discovered mixed in with the stage weapons. It was removed, logged, and replaced with the correct prop.

A few lighting malfunctions occurred, attributed to wiring and damp weather.

A couple of cast members claimed to see a woman in white moving in the hall when they thought they were alone. Again — nothing verified. Publicly, this was put down to flickering bulbs, shadows, and nerves before opening night.

15 November – Local Publicity

A reporter from the Swinton Gazette interviewed Lady Evelyn Barrow in the hall. This produced a striking photo of her with the dagger (“a misunderstanding”), a tone of mild sensationalism about “ghosts, glamour, and opening-night jitters.” and increased ticket sales and village gossip in equal measure.

LADY EVELYN DEFIES GHOST WITH BLADE OF TRUTH!

November 16th 2025



Evelyn found a real dagger on the props table after rehearsal, thought it was a replica, and waved it about during her interview with the Gazette.

Lady Evelyn Hackenschmidt, 26, sighted a ghost in tonight tonight from the stage in 1997 while producing *Romeo & Juliet* – and was never found.

The night's rut-remarked last scene on Tuesday, worns, a Lady Evelyn insisted 'ghosts can be beaten with courage and truth' 02m.

16–18 November – Heightened Tension

In the lead-up to dress rehearsals another minor backstage incident involved candles used by some cast members for “morale” or “atmosphere.” and the burning of sage “for luck”.

A script table was knocked over during a rehearsal when a door swung open unexpectedly.

Multiple performers reported sudden cold spots, and the sound of footsteps and someone humming in the hall's corridors, as well as a distinctive lilac perfume.

19 November – Dress Rehearsal

The final rehearsal was abandoned after the ghostlight flickered several times. during the balcony scene, a draft swept across the hall despite closed doors and a sinister chuckle was reportedly head in the auditorium.

20 November – GAME START (Opening Night)

The production of *Romeo & Juliet* is set to open.

General village mood is excited, heavily gossip-fuelled, and lightly on edge because of Janine's disappearance, and full of talk about “odd happenings” in the hall.

What everyone agrees on is Janine hasn't been found, and like her sister Marianne who vanished directing *Romeo and Juliet* in 1997 may never be, The hall feels... uncanny at times. And the ghostlight has been burning more fiercely than usual.

November 20, 1997

Woman vanishes at 'Romeo and Juliet' production

Marianne Davenham, aged 26, has disappeared while directing a local amateur theatrical production of *Romeo and Juliet* at Swinton Village Hall.



Theatre company members reported last seeing Marianne late in the evening on November 18th.

MISSONDUC
and his
dignity—

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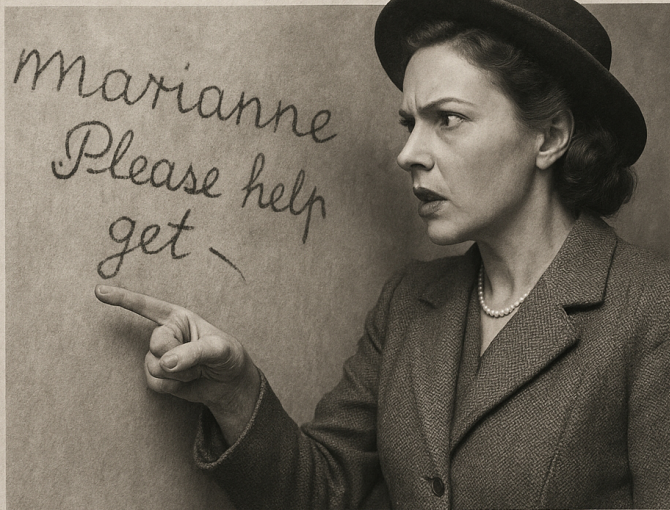
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'Lady Evelyn insisted 'ghosts can be beaten with courage and truth'

'GHOSTLY' WRITING REFERS TO MISSING DIRECTOR IN ALMOST THIRTY-YEAR-OLD MYSTERY



Local woman vanishes at firework display

Janine Davenham, aged 48, was last seen at the village display on the night of 5th December



The last known photo shows her eating a hot dog by the bonfire.

Noticeboard

NOTICE OF DEATH

Reverend Theodore A. Moreby, who was found dead in St Agatha's, Swinton Village, on the evening of October 31st 2018.

His wife Eileen predeceased him by ten years. Vicar of Swinton Village for 30 years, father of Tommy and the twins Alan and Sam, he was noted for his erudition and learning in medieval theological works- and won the Count Magnus Prize for his work on lesser-known pilgrimages during his time at Cambridge.



Noticeboard

WINDOW CLEANER



**SPECIAL PRICES
FOR THE LADIES!**

**TELEPHONE
SWINTON 6969**

SWINTON VILLAGE WOMEN'S INSTITUTE BAKE SALE



**31st OCTOBER 2025
VILLAGE HALL**

WARNING



**BEWARE THE
COLORADO BEETLE**

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE

1975

BONFIRE — AND — FIREWORKS



ON THE VILLAGE GREEN
— IN AID OF —
SWINTON VILLAGE HALL
ADMISSION £1

Noticeboard

BARSETSHIRE CHRONICLE

10th November 2025

POST-EVENT REPORT: THE GREAT PUMPKIN PANIC BAKE SALE!

Swinton Village Hall, 31st October 2025

Lou C Actress, Special Reporter, Ecclesiastical Affairs

Attendance & General Atmosphere

Doors creaked open at 11am sharp, though to be fair they creak every day-Swinton Parish Council has pledged to oil them "before the next fiscal cycle." A queue had already formed by 10:15, largely composed of three small witches, one man in a werewolf onesie who "just wanted a scone," and Mrs. Murgatroyd, who insisted she had pre-queueing rights due to age, experience, and "personal history with the WI." The event was classed as an immediate success

Highlights & Incidents

Mrs. Hardwick's Experimental Trifle lived up to its name but did not dissolve the table this year. Judges noted a mild fizzing sound, a faint smell of cloves and electrical fire, and it caused one small boy to declare, "It's alive!" before he received a clip round the ear and was told to watch his manners. The WI declared this "a marked improvement." on 2024.

Doris Culshaw's Pumpkin the Size of Kent arrived on a flatbed lorry, with Doris riding atop it waving regally like a visiting dignitary. Witnesses noted the pumpkin had its own postcode, blocked all mobile signals, and induced three separate arguments about whether it was technically a squash.

When asked what she'd fed it, Doris replied "Only organic fertiliser." Then added, "And that's all I'm saying" before cackling and being led away for a nice cup of tea by her daughter Norah.

The Vol-au-Vent Showdown (Mavis vs Dot)

It started civilly enough before deteriorating rapidly in to one singed fringe, twelve crushed vol-au-vents, and a Swinton General ambulance being called. One paramedic gently hid the participants in the melee, saying, "Ladies, please, this is not Bake Off." Judges ruled the contest a draw, largely because they feared choosing a winner.

Children's Corner

"Pin the Apron on the Chairwoman" proved popular

until someone used an actual pin. The Deputy Chairwoman was unharmed but "very disappointed."

The Mystery Hamper

The hamper hummed mysteriously throughout the raffle. No one could determine whether the sound was mechanical, decay, or simply indigestion from being stored next to the pickled eggs.

The winner, Mr. Bartholomew Grice, accepted it with the cautious optimism of a man who once won a goose that turned out to be Godfrey. It was eventually discovered to contain a musical birthday card that plays the Last Waltz by Engelbert Humperdinck on repeat.

Halloween Pastries

Mrs. Grice's "Possibly Haunted" Victoria Sponge lived up to its name. Side effects included three cases of déjà vu, two apologies issued for no discernible reason, and one little old man who bowed every time he passed the refreshment table. A medium present (Miss N.C.) declared the cake "spiritually active," though admitted it might just be the sugar.

Committee Notes & Safety Review

The Committee proudly confirms that no pumpkin lanterns were ignited, thanks to: the "Matches Under Guard" initiative and the frightening vigilance of Mrs. Butterworth, who slapped a lighter out of a teenager's hand with the reflexes of a caffeinated ninja. A formal commendation will be issued.

Conclusion

The Great Pumpkin Panic Bake Sale was deemed "A roaring, slightly unsettling, and unexpectedly fizzy success." The £22 raised will go toward repairing the trestle table damaged by last year's trifle, replacing the pavement Doris' lorry crushed during the pumpkin weigh-in, and purchasing a fresh set of fire extinguishers (Halloween Orange).

Swinton Village WI is already planning next year's event, tentatively titled "The 2026 Dangerously Festive Bake Xtravaganza."

Noticeboard

BARSETSHIRE CHRONICLE

30th September 2025

LADY EVELYN IN "GOOSE DIPLOMACY" BID

Local matriarch attempts to reform notorious gander through romance

Lou C Actress, Special Reporter, Ecclesiastical Affairs



Residents of Swinton were treated to an unusual sight yesterday afternoon when Lady Evelyn swept across the village green in full pearls-and-fur regalia, leading Godfrey the Goose by a length of bright red ribbon "for dignity," as she put it.

Godfrey-well-known to readers for his long career of public nuisance, sandwich theft, and menacing behaviour at the bus stop-seemed in unusually good spirits, possibly because he had not yet spotted the vicar.

Awaiting them by the pond was Jemima, a striking young lady-geese recently rehoused from Lower Whittlesford's ornamental lake. With her sleek feathers and demure posture, she looked every inch the sort of respectable fowl a reformed gander ought to court.

"Godfrey simply needs stability," Lady Evelyn declared, giving the gander a firm but encouraging pat. "A good woman-uh, goose-will sort him right out. It's the same principle that saved half the men in my bridge club."

Godfrey, momentarily distracted from biting a passing cyclist, froze upon noticing Jemima. Witnesses reported a subtle straightening of the neck, a smoothing of feathers, and a sort of bashful honking rarely heard from him outside of mating season or acts of petty larceny. Jemima regarded him coolly, gave a dignified wiggle, and then glided across the pond with a grace Godfrey attempted to imitate-before misjudging the bank and sliding in with all the elegance of a sack of wet flour. "Progress!" Lady Evelyn announced, entirely unshaken. "Romance is never tidy."

Locals are cautiously optimistic. The Parish Council notes that if Godfrey can be coaxed into domestic bliss, incidents at the post office may drop by as much as 40%. For now, the pair are said to be "getting to know one another," under Lady Evelyn's close supervision and a strict no-nipping policy.

Noticeboard

**CULSHAW'S
FARM
SHOP**



**FRESH FRUIT
& VEGETABLES
DAIRY PRODUCE
LOCAL MEATS**

ROMEO & JULIET

RUNNING ORDER

Cast Arrive 8.00pm (Do as they please)

ACT ONE: FAIR VERONA 8.30pm

8.45 Curtain (Do as they please)

ACT TWO: THE CAPULET PARTY 9.15pm

9.30 Curtain (cast cheer and have a drink?)

ACT THREE: Balcony Scene 9.45pm

10.00pm (intermission. Angel sells icecreams)

ACT FOUR: The Big Fight 10.30pm

11.45pm (Get ready for the tragic ending!)

ACT FIVE: The Tomb 11.15pm

11.30pm Final Curtain, encores and flowers for the Director. Much cheering! EXEUNT.

11.45. HALL CLOSES TILL NEXT YEAR'S
PRODUCTION BARRY MANILOW THE MUSICAL.

CASTING???

Romeo... Rosie Grice

Mercutio.. Maggie C

Juliet... Juliet

Fr Laurence. Alan M

Lady Capulet... Moira

Nurse... Norah C

Benvolio... Sam Moreby

Prince ?

Tybalt ...

.....

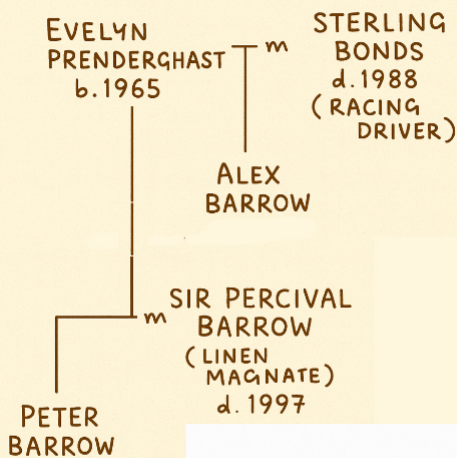
Paris... Peter Barrow

.....**Noticeboard**

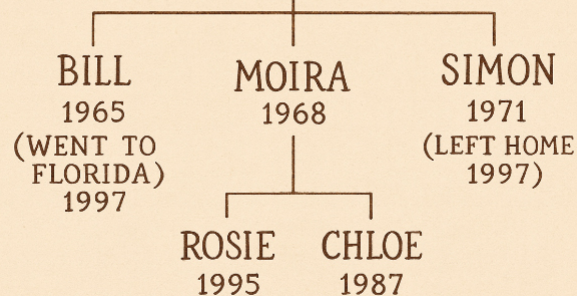
Swinton Village Geneaology Club

Every 1st Wednesday

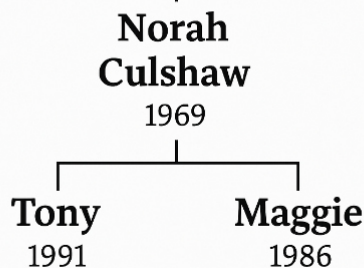
BARROW FAMILY



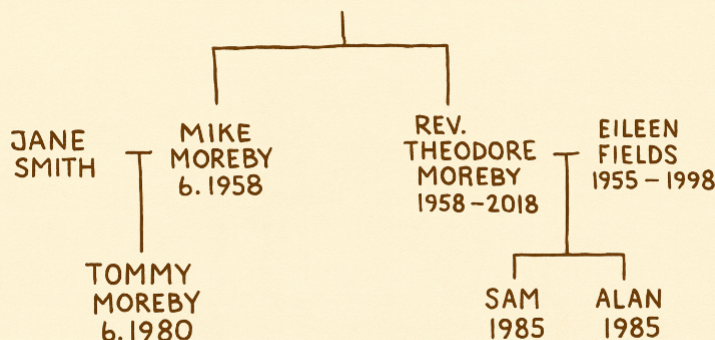
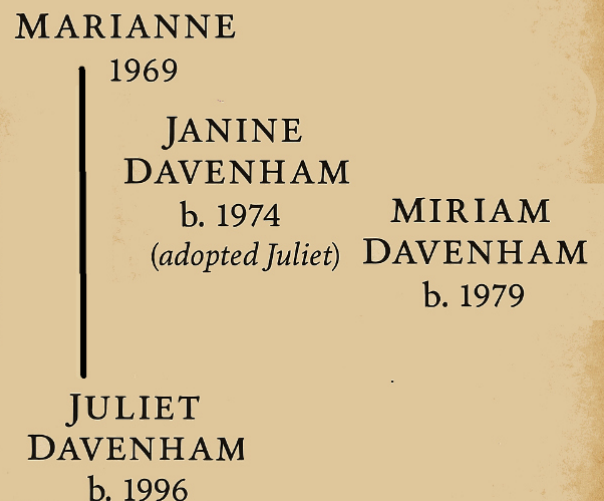
DORIS GRICE — ARTHUR GRICE



Doris Culshaw — George Culshaw



THE DAVENHAM GIRLS



SVGC

Noticeboard

NAME

BADGES

Norah
Culshaw

Peter Barrow

Sam Moreby

Rosie
Grice

Tommy
Moreby

**Tony
Culshaw**

*Alan
Moreby*

**ALEX
BARROW**

Angel

Chloe
Grice

**Lady Evelyn
Barrow**

JULIET
DAVENHAM

*Maggie
Culshaw*

MARK HADES

Miriam Davenham

*Moir
Grice*

ACT 2: The BANQUET

SCENE V — THE CAPULET PARTY

***(A hall in Capulet's mansion. BUT NOT A HALL — a glitter-bombed, disco-lit fever dream. Think: 1970s Eurovision + Drag Race + a royal wedding + a rave. Bass thuds. Fairy lights flicker. A smoke machine goes off with the enthusiasm of a dying volcano.)**

Enter LADY CAPULET, JULIET, NURSE, and assorted Capulet Party Monsters

LADY CAPULET

LADIES, GENTS, AND ANYONE WHO HAS EVER SPENT MORE THAN £40 ON GLITTER —

WELCOME TO MY HOUSE!

If your toes aren't aching, you're dancing.

If your toes are aching, you're still dancing.

Come on! Who's gonna deny me?

If you say you can't dance, you've got corns. I SAID IT.

(Music THUMPS. Everyone dances like they're performing for Eurovision.)

LADY CAPULET (roaring over bass)

Turn the lights up! Tables up!

It's HOT in here — and not just 'cause half of you dressed like sequinned cocktails!

Cousin Capulet! When's the last time we danced?

Don't say thirty years — I'm sensitive.

COUSIN CAPULET

Thirty years.

LADY CAPULET

Absolutely not. Fake news. Twenty-five at most!

Now shut up and move your hips, you antique.

Enter ROMEO (He walks in like he's in a fragrance commercial titled "Forbidden".)

ROMEO (to a passing server)

Who is THAT — the girl glowing like an iPhone at full brightness?

SERVANT No idea, mate. I just hand out canapés.

ROMEO

She teaches torches how to do their job.

She's a diamond lost in a Primark world.

Did I ever love before?

Apparently not.

(He stares at JULIET like she's the only functioning wi-fi signal in Verona.)

Enter TYBALT — smelling of danger and toxic masculinity

TYBALT

That voice.

That haircut.

That dramatic sighing.

That's a Montague.

Fetch me my rapier. I am READY.

LADY CAPULET

Calm down, darling. It's a PARTY.

We do NOT stab the guests.

Not before dessert, anyway.

TYBALT

He is our ancient enemy!

LADY CAPULET

He's also well-behaved and honestly quite fit.

Be nice. Or go sulk in the pantry.

Those are your options.

TYBALT

This sweetness will turn to gall—

TWE SCRIPTS

ACT ONE: Fair Verona

ACT 1, Scene 1

SCENE I. Verona. A public place.

Enter SAMPSON and GREGORY, of the house of Capulet, armed with swords and bucklers of the house of Montague, armed with swords and bucklers

Enter ABRAHAM and BALTHASAR

They fight

Enter BENVOLIO

BENVOLIO

Part, fools!

Put up your swords; you know not what you do.

Beats down their swords

Enter TYBALT

TYBALT

What, art thou drawn among these heartless hinds?

Turn thee, Benvolio, look upon thy death.

BENVOLIO

I do but keep the peace: put up thy sword, Or manage it to part these men with me.

TYBALT

What, drawn, and talk of peace! I hate the word,

As I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee: Have at thee, coward!

They fight

Enter, several of both houses, who join the fray; then enter Citizens, with clubs

First Citizen

Clubs, bills, and partisans! strike! beat them down!

Down with the Capulets! down with the Montagues!

Enter CAPULET in his gown, and LADY CAPULET

CAPULET

What noise is this? Give me my long sword, ho!

LADY CAPULET

A crutch, a crutch! why call you for a sword?

CAPULET

My sword, I say! Old Montague is come, And flourishes his blade in spite of me.

Enter MONTAGUE and LADY MONTAGUE

MONTAGUE

Thou villain Capulet,--Hold me not, let me go.

LADY MONTAGUE

Thou shalt not stir a foot to seek a foe.

Enter PRINCE, with Attendants

PRINCE

Rebellious subjects, enemies to peace, Profaners of this neighbour-stained steel,-- Will they not hear? What, ho! you men, you beasts,

That quench the fire of your pernicious rage With purple fountains issuing from your veins,

On pain of torture, from those bloody hands Throw your mistemper'd weapons to the ground,

And hear the sentence of your moved prince. Three civil brawls, bred of an airy word,

By thee, old Capulet, and Montague, Have thrice disturb'd the quiet of our streets, And made Verona's ancient citizens

Cast by their grave beseeching ornaments, To wield old partisans, in hands as old, Canker'd with peace, to part your canker'd hate:

If ever you disturb our streets again, Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace.

For this time, all the rest depart away:

You Capulet; shall go along with me:

And, Montague, come you this afternoon, To know our further pleasure in this case, To old Free-town, our common judgment-place.

Once more, on pain of death, all men depart.

Exeunt all but MONTAGUE, LADY MONTAGUE, and BENVOLIO

MONTAGUE

Who set this ancient quarrel new abroach? Speak, nephew, were you by when it began?

BENVOLIO

Here were the servants of your adversary,
 And yours, close fighting ere I did approach:
 I drew to part them: in the instant came
 The fiery Tybalt, with his sword prepared,
 Which, as he breathed defiance to my ears,
 He swung about his head and cut the winds,
 Who nothing hurt withal hiss'd him in scorn:
 While we were interchanging thrusts and
 blows,
 Came more and more and fought on part and
 part,

Till the prince came, who parted either part.

LADY MONTAGUE

O, where is Romeo? saw you him to-day?
 Right glad I am he was not at this fray.

BENVOLIO

Madam, an hour before the worshipp'd sun
 Peer'd forth the golden window of the east,
 A troubled mind drave me to walk abroad;
 Where, underneath the grove of sycamore
 That westward rooteth from the city's side,
 So early walking did I see your son:
 Towards him I made, but he was ware of me
 And stole into the covert of the wood:
 I, measuring his affections by my own,
 That most are busied when they're most
 alone,
 Pursued my humour not pursuing his,
 And gladly shunn'd who gladly fled from me.

Enter ROMEO

BENVOLIO

See, where he comes: so please you, step
 aside;
 I'll know his grievance, or be much denied.

MONTAGUE

I would thou wert so happy by thy stay,
 To hear true shrift. Come, madam, let's away.

Exeunt MONTAGUE and LADY

MONTAGUE**BENVOLIO**

Good-morrow, cousin.

ROMEO

Is the day so young?

BENVOLIO

But new struck nine.

ROMEO

Ay me! sad hours seem long.

Was that my father that went hence so fast?

BENVOLIO

It was. What sadness lengthens Romeo's
 hours?

ROMEO

Not having that, which, having, makes them
 short.

BENVOLIO

In love?

ROMEO

Out--

BENVOLIO

Of love?

ROMEO

Out of her favour, where I am in love.

BENVOLIO

Alas, that love, so gentle in his view,
 Should be so tyrannous and rough in proof!

ROMEO

Alas, that love, whose view is muffled still,
 Should, without eyes, see pathways to his will!
 Where shall we dine? O me! What fray was
 here?

Yet tell me not, for I have heard it all.

Here's much to do with hate, but more with
 love.

Why, then, O brawling love! O loving hate!

O any thing, of nothing first create!

O heavy lightness! serious vanity!

Mis-shapen chaos of well-seeming forms!

Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire,
 sick health!

Still-waking sleep, that is not what it is!

This love feel I, that feel no love in this.

Dost thou not laugh?

BENVOLIO

No, coz, I rather weep.

ROMEO

Good heart, at what?

BENVOLIO

At thy good heart's oppression.

ROMEO

Why, such is love's transgression.

Griefs of mine own lie heavy in my breast,

Which thou wilt propagate, to have it prest

With more of thine: this love that thou hast
 shown

Doth add more grief to too much of mine own.

Love is a smoke raised with the fume of sighs;

Being purged, a fire sparkling in lovers' eyes;

Being vex'd a sea nourish'd with lovers' tears:

What is it else? a madness most discreet,

A choking gall and a preserving sweet.

Farewell, my coz.

BENVOLIO

Soft! I will go along;

An if you leave me so, you do me wrong.

ACT ONE: Fair Verona

SCENE I – VERONA CITY CENTRE, NIGHT.

A public square pulsing with neon. Holographic adverts flicker. Basslines thump. Enter SAMPSON and GREGORY (Capulet Security), swaggering in LED-lit jackets and chunky gleaming swords.

SAMPSON

(chewing gum like it owes him money)
Greg, babe, I'm telling you now — I'm NOT doing the dirty work. We are DONE being the city's emotional bin-men.

GREGORY

Please. If we carried coals, we'd at least get overtime.

SAMPSON

Nah, nah — if someone winds me up, the sword's OUT. Like, *immediately*.

GREGORY

Only thing you draw quick is your car insurance renewal.

Right — TOOL TIME. Montagues incoming.

Enter ABRAHAM and BALTHASAR (Montague Boys) in matching neon denim.

SAMPSON

(brandishing sword like a TikTok thirst trap)
Weapon's OUT. Start something and I've got your back.

GREGORY

No — literally, you'll turn and show them your back as you run.

SAMPSON

(whispers) Fear me.

GREGORY

I fear your *decision-making*, but okay.

SAMPSON

I'll glare. You glare. Let THEM start it.

GREGORY

I'll frown like I'm reading the comments section on Facebook.

SAMPSON

And I —
(BITES THUMB in slow-motion, sparkles flying)
— will bite my thumb at them.

ABRAHAM

(excited)
Did you just bite your thumb at us?

SAMPSON

I bit my thumb, sir.

ABRAHAM

But AT US?

SAMPSON

(whispering) Greg, is that illegal?

GREGORY

Yeah mate, sodomy in this state!

SAMPSON

(LOUDLY, with innocence of a fox in a henhouse)
Not AT you, sir! Just... biting. Independently. Artistically.

THEY FIGHT.

Kickflips, sword sparks, neon reflections everywhere.

Enter BENVOLIO (Montague Peacemaker).

BENVOLIO

(voice like the sensible friend in a club at 1am)
STOP!
Put DOWN your swords — you look ridiculous.
(SLAM-cuts to him knocking weapons aside)

Enter TYBALT (Capulet Chaos King).

Slow-motion entrance. Gold jacket. Glitter explosion. Electric guitar sting.

TYBALT

Well WELL — Benny boy, playing peacekeeper again?
Drawn steel and soft speeches? Pick ONE.

BENVOLIO

I'm literally trying to stop the stabbing.

TYBALT

(Stalking forward like a jaguar in Prada)
Peace?
I HATE the word.
Like I hate hell.
And all Montagues.
And ESPECIALLY you.

THEY FIGHT.

Martial arts, parkour, unnecessary backflips. Verona citizens join, throwing chairs.

Enter CITIZENS with improvised weapons.

FIRST CITIZEN

(armed with a mop and vengeance)

DOWN WITH BOTH HOUSES! I JUST MOPPED THIS PAVEMENT!

Enter CAPULET in a silk robe; LADY CAPULET in couture.

CAPULET

What's all this CHAOS? Fetch my SWORD!

LADY CAPULET

(fetching wine instead)

A crutch, darling. You need a crutch.

CAPULET

Old Montague is waving his blade at me — RUDE.

Enter MONTAGUE AND LADY MONTAGUE.

MONTAGUE

LET ME AT HIM —

LADY MONTAGUE

You'll sit down and have some water.

Enter PRINCE in PURPLE with armed drones and megaphone reverb. Purple Rain plays in background.

PRINCE

ENOUGH!

You chaos gremlins! You violence-obsessed glam-goths!

This is the **THIRD** time you've turned my city into a vampire LARP gone wrong!

Drop your weapons before my drones tase you into next Tuesday.

If ANY of you start this nonsense again — you DIE.

(Snap-and-point)

Capulet — with me.

Montague — meeting, 4pm. Bring notes.

EVERYONE OUT!

Crowd disperses. Neon flickers down to gentle purple.

Left: MONTAGUE, LADY MONTAGUE, and BENVOLIO.

MONTAGUE

How did this even start? TikTok? A meme?

BENVOLIO

Your lot and their lot. Same old.

Then Tybalt strutted in and everything exploded.

You know the drill.

LADY MONTAGUE

But where's ROMEO? He wasn't here, thank Versace!

BENVOLIO

Saw him brooding under the sycamores at dawn.

Full aesthetic. Hood up. AirPods in.

Didn't want company.

MONTAGUE

Every morning he's out there crying at sunrise like it's an emo video.

BENVOLIO

Do you know what's wrong?

MONTAGUE

No — he's locked up in his room, dramatic as anything.

I'd help if he'd TALK.

Enter ROMEO, wearing melancholy like couture.

BENVOLIO

Morning, cousin.

ROMEO

Ughhhh.

Is it still today?

BENVOLIO

It's barely nine.

ROMEO

Time moves slower when you're HEARTBROKEN, Benji.

BENVOLIO

Who's the lucky girl?

ROMEO

Lucky?

No.

I'm in love and she hates me.

A tragic masterpiece.

BENVOLIO

Love shouldn't HURT this much.

ROMEO

It DOES.

Love is smoke, tears, fire, chaos, glitter, despair — it's EVERYTHING and NOTHING.

She won't love me. She's basically a chastity fortress.

BENVOLIO

Then forget her. Look at literally any other girl. Verona's FULL of women.

ROMEO

When I look at other beauty, it just reminds me she's BETTER.

You're not helping.

BENVOLIO

Watch me. I'll teach you to forget her or DIE trying.

They exit into neon fog, the beat rising again.

ACT 2: The BANQUET

SCENE V. A hall in Capulet's house.

Enter LADY CAPULET, with JULIET and others of his house, meeting the Guests and Maskers

LADY CAPULET

Welcome, gentlemen! ladies that have their toes

Unplagued with corns will have a bout with you.

You are welcome, gentlemen! come, musicians, play.

A hall, a hall! give room! and foot it, girls.

Music plays, and they dance

More light, you knaves; and turn the tables up,

And quench the fire, the room is grown too hot.

Ah, sirrah, this unlook'd-for sport comes well.

Nay, sit, nay, sit, good cousin Capulet;

For you and I are past our dancing days:

How long is't now since last yourself and I

Were in a mask?

Second Capulet

By'r lady, thirty years.

ROMEO

[Aside] What lady is that, which doth enrich the hand Of yonder knight?

O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!

It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night

Like a rich jewel in an Ethiope's ear;

Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear!

So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows,

As yonder lady o'er her fellows shows.

The measure done, I'll watch her place of stand,

And, touching hers, make blessed my rude hand.

Did my heart love till now? forswear it, sight!

For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.

TYBALT

This, by his voice, should be a Montague.

Fetch me my rapier, boy. What dares the slave

Come hither, cover'd with an antic face,

To fleer and scorn at our solemnity?

Now, by the stock and honour of my kin,

To strike him dead, I hold it not a sin.

LADY CAPULET

Why, how now, kinsman! wherefore storm you so?

TYBALT

Uncle, this is a Montague, our foe,

A villain that is hither come in spite,

To scorn at our solemnity this night.

LADY CAPULET

Young Romeo is it?

TYBALT

'Tis he, that villain Romeo.

LADY CAPULET

Content thee, gentle coz, let him alone;

He bears him like a portly gentleman;

And, to say truth, Verona brags of him

To be a virtuous and well-govern'd youth:

I would not for the wealth of all the town

Here in my house do him disparagement:
Therefore be patient, take no note of him:
It is my will, the which if thou respect,
Show a fair presence and put off these frowns,
And ill-beseeming semblance for a feast.

TYBALT

It fits, when such a villain is a guest:
I'll not endure him.

CAPULET

He shall be endured:
What, Goodman boy! I say, he shall: go to;
Am I the mistress here, or you? go to.
You'll not endure him! God shall mend my soul!
You'll make a mutiny among my guests!
You will set cock-a-hoop! you'll be the man!

TYBALT

Why, aunt, 'tis a shame.

CAPULET

Go to, go to;
You are a saucy boy: is't so, indeed?
This trick may chance to scathe you, I know what:
You must contrary me! marry, 'tis time.
Well said, my hearts! You are a princeling; go:
Be quiet, or--More light, more light! For shame!
I'll make you quiet. What, cheerly, my hearts!

TYBALT

Patience perforce with wilful choler meeting
Makes my flesh tremble in their different greeting.
I will withdraw: but this intrusion shall
Now seeming sweet convert to bitter gall.

Exit

ROMEO

[To JULIET] If I profane with my unworthiest
hand

This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this:
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

JULIET

Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too
much,

Which mannerly devotion shows in this;

For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do
touch,

And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

ROMEO

Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?

JULIET

Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

ROMEO

O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do;
They pray, grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.

JULIET

Saints do not move, though grant for prayers'
sake.

ROMEO

Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take.
Thus from my lips, by yours, my sin is purged.

JULIET

Then have my lips the sin that they have took.

ROMEO

Sin from thy lips? O trespass sweetly urged!
Give me my sin again.

JULIET

You kiss by the book.

Nurse

Madam, your mother craves a word with you.

ROMEO

What is her mother?

Nurse

Marry, bachelor,

Her mother is the lady of the house,

And a good lady, and a wise and virtuous

I nursed her daughter, that you talk'd withal;

I tell you, he that can lay hold of her

Shall have the chinks.

ROMEO

Is she a Capulet?

O dear account! my life is my foe's debt.

BENVOLIO

Away, begone; the sport is at the best.

ROMEO

Ay, so I fear; the more is my unrest.

LADY CAPULET

Nay, gentlemen, prepare not to be gone;

We have a trifling foolish banquet towards.

Is it e'en so? why, then, I thank you all

I thank you, honest gentlemen; good night.

More torches here! Come on then, let's to bed.

Ah, sirrah, by my fay, it waxes late:

I'll to my rest.

Exeunt all but JULIET and Nurse

JULIET

Come hither, nurse. What is yond gentleman?

Nurse

The son and heir of old Tiberio.

JULIET

What's he that now is going out of door?

Nurse

Marry, that, I think, be young Petrucio.

JULIET

What's he that follows there, that would not dance?

Nurse

I know not.

JULIET

Go ask his name: if he be married.

My grave is like to be my wedding bed.

Nurse

His name is Romeo, and a Montague;

The only son of your great enemy.

JULIET

My only love sprung from my only hate!

Too early seen unknown, and known too late!

Prodigious birth of love it is to me,

That I must love a loathed enemy.

Nurse

What's this? what's this?

JULIET

A rhyme I learn'd even now

Of one I danced withal.

One calls within 'Juliet.'

Nurse

Anon, anon!

Come, let's away; the strangers all are gone.

Exeunt

ACT 2: The BANQUET

SCENE V — THE CAPULET PARTY

***(A hall in Capulet's mansion. BUT NOT A HALL — a glitter-bombed, disco-lit fever dream. Think: 1970s Eurovision + Drag Race + a royal wedding + a rave. Bass thuds. Fairy lights flicker. A smoke machine goes off with the enthusiasm of a dying volcano.)**

Enter LADY CAPULET, JULIET, NURSE, and assorted Capulet Party Monsters

LADY CAPULET

LADIES, GENTS, AND ANYONE WHO HAS EVER SPENT MORE THAN £40 ON GLITTER —

WELCOME TO MY HOUSE!

If your toes aren't aching, you're dancing.

If your toes are aching, you're still dancing.

Come on! Who's gonna deny me?

If you say you can't dance, you've got corns. I SAID IT.

(Music THUMPS. Everyone dances like they're performing for Eurovision.)

LADY CAPULET (roaring over bass)

Turn the lights up! Tables up!

It's HOT in here — and not just 'cause half of you dressed like sequinned cocktails!

Cousin Capulet! When's the last time we danced?

Don't say thirty years — I'm sensitive.

COUSIN CAPULET

Thirty years.

LADY CAPULET

Absolutely not. Fake news. Twenty-five at most!

Now shut up and move your hips, you antique.

Enter ROMEO (He walks in like he's in a fragrance commercial titled "Forbidden".)

ROMEO (to a passing server)

Who is THAT — the girl glowing like an iPhone at full brightness?

SERVANT No idea, mate. I just hand out canapés.

ROMEO

She teaches torches how to do their job.

She's a diamond lost in a Primark world.

Did I ever love before?

Apparently not.

(He stares at JULIET like she's the only functioning wi-fi signal in Verona.)

Enter TYBALT — smelling of danger and toxic masculinity

TYBALT

That voice.

That haircut.

That dramatic sighing.

That's a Montague.

Fetch me my rapier. I am READY.

LADY CAPULET

Calm down, darling. It's a PARTY.

We do NOT stab the guests.

Not before dessert, anyway.

TYBALT

He is our ancient enemy!

LADY CAPULET

He's also well-behaved and honestly quite fit.

Be nice. Or go sulk in the pantry.

Those are your options.

TYBALT

This sweetness will turn to gall—

(storms off like a man whose Spotify just switched to ads)

ROMEO & JULIET finally lock eyes

(Everything goes slow-mo. Glitter floats. A single violin shrieks like it's overacting for an award.)

ROMEO

If my hand profanes your shrine,
my lips are ready to apologise.

JULIET

Sir, calm down, you're already forgiven.

Hands touch, that's normal.

Lips? Those are for prayer.

ROMEO

Then let my lips pray.

(They kiss. Fireworks explode outside in the exact shape of a heart because fate is showing off.)

JULIET

Now my lips have sin.

ROMEO

Return it then.

JULIET

Fine. (kisses him again)

Happy?

Enter NURSE, bursting through dancers like a one-woman stampede

NURSE

JULIET! Stop smooching strangers like you're auditioning for Love Island.

ROMEO

Who's her mother?

NURSE

The LADY OF THIS HOUSE, genius.

And I raised Juliet —

anyone who marries her gets the full Capulet drama package.

No refunds.

ROMEO

...She's a Capulet?

Oh this is going to ruin me.

BENVOLIO (dragging him off)

Mate, we need to leave before Tybalt does murder with jazz hands.

Everyone exits except JULIET & NURSE

JULIET

Nurse! Who was that boy?

No, the one who refused to dance!

NURSE

Oh. Him.

Don't know.

Want me to go full stalker mode?

JULIET

Yes.

If he's married, I'm moving to a convent or a volcano.

NURSE

(gasps loudly enough to disturb the pigeons outside)

GIRL! His name is ROMEO. And he is a MONTAGUE. The only son of your dad's mortal nemesis.

JULIET

(excited and horrified)

My only love sprung from my only hate—

NURSE DON'T LOOK AT ME.

NURSE

What's that then? Poetry? Emotional damage?

Are we crying or swooning?

(They exit as the party collapses into glitter, confetti, and three drunk cousins dancing to ABBA.)

END SCENE.

ACT 3 Balcony Scene

SCENE II. Capulet's orchard.

Enter ROMEO

ROMEO

He jests at scars that never felt a wound.

JULIET appears above at a window

But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks?

It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.

Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,

Who is already sick and pale with grief,

That thou her maid art far more fair than she:

Be not her maid, since she is envious;

Her vestal livery is but sick and green

And none but fools do wear it; cast it off.

It is my lady, O, it is my love!

O, that she knew she were!

She speaks yet she says nothing: what of that?

Her eye discourses; I will answer it.

I am too bold, 'tis not to me she speaks:

Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,

Having some business, do entreat her eyes

To twinkle in their spheres till they return.

What if her eyes were there, they in her head?

The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars,

As daylight doth a lamp; her eyes in heaven

Would through the airy region stream so bright

That birds would sing and think it were not night.

See, how she leans her cheek upon her hand!

O, that I were a glove upon that hand,

That I might touch that cheek!

JULIET

Ay me!

ROMEO

She speaks:

O, speak again, bright angel! for thou art

As glorious to this night, being o'er my head

As is a winged messenger of heaven

Unto the white-upturned wondering eyes

Of mortals that fall back to gaze on him

When he bestrides the lazy-pacing clouds

And sails upon the bosom of the air.

JULIET

O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?

Deny thy father and refuse thy name;

Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,

And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

ROMEO

[Aside] Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?

JULIET

'Tis but thy name that is my enemy;

Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.

What's Montague? it is nor hand, nor foot,

Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!
What's in a name? that which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet;
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,
And for that name which is no part of thee
Take all myself.

ROMEO

I take thee at thy word:
Call me but love, and I'll be new baptized;
Henceforth I never will be Romeo.

JULIET

What man art thou that thus bescreen'd in night
So stumblest on my counsel?

ROMEO

By a name
I know not how to tell thee who I am:
My name, dear saint, is hateful to myself,
Because it is an enemy to thee;
Had I it written, I would tear the word.

JULIET

My ears have not yet drunk a hundred words
Of that tongue's utterance, yet I know the sound:
Art thou not Romeo and a Montague?

ROMEO

Neither, fair saint, if either thee dislike.

JULIET

How camest thou hither, tell me, and wherefore?
The orchard walls are high and hard to climb,
And the place death, considering who thou art,
If any of my kinsmen find thee here.

ROMEO

With love's light wings did I o'er-perch these walls;
For stony limits cannot hold love out,
And what love can do that dares love attempt;
Therefore thy kinsmen are no let to me.

JULIET

If they do see thee, they will murder thee.

ROMEO

Alack, there lies more peril in thine eye
Than twenty of their swords: look thou but sweet,
And I am proof against their enmity.

JULIET

I would not for the world they saw thee here.

ROMEO

I have night's cloak to hide me from their sight;
And but thou love me, let them find me here:
My life were better ended by their hate,
Than death prorogued, wanting of thy love.

JULIET

By whose direction found'st thou out this place?

ROMEO

By love, who first did prompt me to inquire;
He lent me counsel and I lent him eyes.

I am no pilot; yet, wert thou as far
As that vast shore wash'd with the farthest sea,
I would adventure for such merchandise.

JULIET

Thou know'st the mask of night is on my face,
Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek
For that which thou hast heard me speak to-night
Fain would I dwell on form, fain, fain deny
What I have spoke: but farewell compliment!
Dost thou love me? I know thou wilt say 'Ay,'

And I will take thy word: yet if thou swear'st,
Thou mayst prove false; at lovers' perjuries
Then say, Jove laughs. O gentle Romeo,
If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully:
Or if thou think'st I am too quickly won,
I'll frown and be perverse and say thee nay,
So thou wilt woo; but else, not for the world.
In truth, fair Montague, I am too fond,
And therefore thou mayst think my 'havior light:
But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true
Than those that have more cunning to be
strange.

I should have been more strange, I must confess,
But that thou overheard'st, ere I was ware,
My true love's passion: therefore pardon me,
And not impute this yielding to light love,
Which the dark night hath so discovered.

ROMEO

Lady, by yonder blessed moon I swear
That tips with silver all these fruit-tree tops--

JULIET

O, swear not by the moon, the inconstant moon,
That monthly changes in her circled orb,
Lest that thy love prove likewise variable.

ROMEO

What shall I swear by?

JULIET

Do not swear at all;
Or, if thou wilt, swear by thy gracious self,
Which is the god of my idolatry,
And I'll believe thee.

ROMEO

If my heart's dear love--

JULIET

Well, do not swear: although I joy in thee,
I have no joy of this contract to-night:
It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden;
Too like the lightning, which doth cease to be
Ere one can say 'It lightens.' Sweet, good night!
This bud of love, by summer's ripening breath,
May prove a beauteous flower when next we
meet.
Good night, good night! as sweet repose and rest
Come to thy heart as that within my breast!

ROMEO

O, wilt thou leave me so unsatisfied?

JULIET

What satisfaction canst thou have to-night?

ROMEO

The exchange of thy love's faithful vow for mine.

JULIET

I gave thee mine before thou didst request it:
And yet I would it were to give again.

ROMEO

Wouldst thou withdraw it? for what purpose, love?

JULIET

But to be frank, and give it thee again.
And yet I wish but for the thing I have:
My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
My love as deep; the more I give to thee,
The more I have, for both are infinite.

Nurse calls within

I hear some noise within; dear love, adieu!
Anon, good nurse! Sweet Montague, be true.
Stay but a little, I will come again.

Exit, above

ROMEO

O blessed, blessed night! I am afeard.

Being in night, all this is but a dream,

Too flattering-sweet to be substantial.

Re-enter JULIET, above

JULIET

Three words, dear Romeo, and good night indeed.

If that thy bent of love be honourable,

Thy purpose marriage, send me word to-morrow,

By one that I'll procure to come to thee,

Where and what time thou wilt perform the rite;

And all my fortunes at thy foot I'll lay

And follow thee my lord throughout the world.

Nurse

[Within] Madam!

JULIET

I come, anon.--But if thou mean'st not well,

I do beseech thee--

Nurse

[Within] Madam!

JULIET

By and by, I come:--

To cease thy suit, and leave me to my grief:

To-morrow will I send.

ROMEO

So thrive my soul--

JULIET

A thousand times good night!

Exit, above

ACT 3 balcony scene

(Capulet Orchard — purple neon, smoke machine on a low simmer, distant traffic hum, a disco-lit koi pond glitters like a nightclub for fish. ROMEO enters as if he's in a perfume advert.)

ROMEO

(whisper-dramatic)

Right. I'm in my feelings. Classic.

He mocks my heartbreak 'cause he's never actually felt anything except maybe heartburn.

(JULIET appears at the balcony, backlit like a celestial TikTok influencer.)

Holy—

What light breaks yonder window?

It's like the sun, but with better contouring.

JULIET

(sighs like a woman who has read too many fanfics)

Ughhhh. Romeo.

ROMEO

(throws arms wide)

Angel! Please continue. I'm ready for my emotional evisceration.

JULIET

(full meltdown)

Why do you have to be Romeo?

Can't you be Kevin? Or Steve? Or literally any name that doesn't start a family knife fight?

If you love me, ditch the Montague brand.

If not, I'll ditch the Capulet one — I'm rebranding anyway.

ROMEO

(to audience)

Do I interrupt? Do I let her monologue?

No. I'm going in.

JULIET

Names are fake, right? A rose would smell the same if we called it "Travis."

So if you weren't called Romeo... you'd still be hot.

Just drop the name. I'll drop my whole life. No pressure.

ROMEO

(steps into the light, soft boy mode activated)

Say "love" once and I'll change my whole identity. Witness Protection who?

From now on I am... whatever you want.

Chad. MoonPie. Beyoncé. I'm flexible.

JULIET (in shock)

WHO are you creeping in my orchard like a budget ninja?!

ROMEO

Honestly my name is a hate crime in your household.

Wish I could scratch it off my birth certificate with a spork.

JULIET

How did you even get in here? These walls are huge. Also, my cousins would absolutely murder you. Like... with enthusiasm. With choreography.

ROMEO

Love gave me wings. And cardio.

JULIET

They'll kill you.

ROMEO

Please. Your eyes are more dangerous. One

flirty glance and I flatline.

JULIET

I don't want them to see you.

ROMEO

If you don't love me, let them catch me.

Otherwise? I'm basically invisible.

JULIET

Do you ACTUALLY love me? Because I know you're going to say yes. I just need you to say it without being cringe.

ROMEO

By the moon I swear—

JULIET

(interrupting, furious)

NO. Do NOT swear by the moon. She changes phases more often than my Spotify playlist.

Swear by... I don't know. Yourself. Your skincare regime. Something stable.

ROMEO

Okay then. I swear my heart's—

JULIET

Look, it's all too much. Too sudden. Too Netflix-pilot-energy. Let's slow burn it like normal traumatised teens.

Good night, Romeo.

ROMEO

Already?

I came all this way! I did parkour!

JULIET

What do you want? A loyalty card stamp?

If you want a vow — fine.

Love me faithfully, and we're good.

(Sudden NURSE voice offstage, like a foghorn crossed with a Northern auntie.)

NURSE (within)

JULIET! GIRL! Are you FaceTiming the shrubbery again?!

JULIET

(hisses)

COMING!

(To Romeo)

If you want to marry me, text me tomorrow. I'll send someone.

But if you're messing me about — I will block you so hard your ancestors feel it.

NURSE (within)

DON'T "COMING" ME. I KNOW THAT TONE.

JULIET

Bye! (flees)

ROMEO

Holy night. Am I dreaming? If this is a hallucination please let it be the good kind.

(JULIET pops back into view.)

JULIET

Three words:

Marry.

Me.

Tomorrow.

NURSE (within)

JULIET CAPULET I WILL COME UP THERE WITH MY SLIPPER AND A BAD ATTITUDE.

JULIET

(shoots finger guns to Romeo)

Nine o'clock. Don't be weird.

BYEEEEEE.

END SCENE.

ACT 4: THE FIGHT

SCENE I. A public place.

Enter MERCUTIO, BENVOLIO, Page, and Servants

BENVOLIO

I pray thee, good Mercutio, let's retire:

The day is hot, the Capulets abroad,

And, if we meet, we shall not scape a brawl;

For now, these hot days, is the mad blood stirring.

MERCUTIO

Thou art like one of those fellows that when he enters the confines of a tavern claps me his sword upon the table and says 'God send me no need of thee!' and by the operation of the second cup draws it on the drawer, when indeed there is no need.

BENVOLIO

Am I like such a fellow?

MERCUTIO

Come, come, thou art as hot a Jack in thy mood as any in Italy, and as soon moved to be moody, and as soon moody to be moved.

BENVOLIO

And what to?

MERCUTIO

Nay, an there were two such, we should have none shortly, for one would kill the other. Thou! why, thou wilt quarrel with a man that hath a hair more, or a hair less, in his beard, than thou hast: thou wilt quarrel with a man for cracking nuts, having no other reason but because thou hast hazel eyes: what eye but such an eye would spy out such a quarrel? Thy head is as full of quarrels as an egg is full of meat, and yet thy head hath been beaten as addle as an egg for quarrelling: thou hast quarrelled with a

man for coughing in the street, because he hath wakened thy dog that hath lain asleep in the sun: didst thou not fall out with a tailor for wearing his new doublet before Easter? with another, for tying his new shoes with old riband? and yet thou wilt tutor me from quarrelling!

BENVOLIO

An I were so apt to quarrel as thou art, any man should buy the fee-simple of my life for an hour and a quarter.

Enter TYBALT and others

TYBALT

Follow me close, for I will speak to them.

Gentlemen, good den: a word with one of you.

MERCUTIO

And but one word with one of us? couple it with something; make it a word and a blow.

TYBALT

You shall find me apt enough to that, sir, an you will give me occasion.

MERCUTIO

Could you not take some occasion without giving?

TYBALT

Mercutio, thou consort'st with Romeo,--

MERCUTIO

Consort! what, dost thou make us minstrels? an thou make minstrels of us, look to hear nothing but

discords: here's my fiddlestick; here's that shall make you dance. 'Zounds, consort!

BENVOLIO

We talk here in the public haunt of men:

Either withdraw unto some private place,
And reason coldly of your grievances,
Or else depart; here all eyes gaze on us.

MERCUTIO

Men's eyes were made to look, and let them gaze;
I will not budge for no man's pleasure, I.

Enter ROMEO

TYBALT

Well, peace be with you, sir: here comes my man.

MERCUTIO

But I'll be hanged, sir, if he wear your livery:
Marry, go before to field, he'll be your follower;
Your worship in that sense may call him 'man.'

TYBALT

Romeo, the hate I bear thee can afford
No better term than this,--thou art a villain.

ROMEO

Tybalt, the reason that I have to love thee
Doth much excuse the appertaining rage
To such a greeting: villain am I none;
Therefore farewell; I see thou know'st me not.

TYBALT

Boy, this shall not excuse the injuries
That thou hast done me; therefore turn and draw.

ROMEO

I do protest, I never injured thee,
But love thee better than thou canst devise,
Till thou shalt know the reason of my love:
And so, good Capulet,--which name I tender
As dearly as my own,--be satisfied.

MERCUTIO

O calm, dishonourable, vile submission!

Draws

Tybalt, you rat-catcher, will you walk?

TYBALT

What wouldst thou have with me?

MERCUTIO

Good king of cats, nothing but one of your nine
lives; that I mean to make bold withal, and as you
shall use me hereafter, drybeat the rest of the
eight. Will you pluck your sword out of his pitcher
by the ears? make haste, lest mine be about your
ears ere it be out.

TYBALT

I am for you.

Drawing

ROMEO

Gentle Mercutio, put thy rapier up.

MERCUTIO

Come, sir, your passado.

They fight

ROMEO

Draw, Benvolio; beat down their weapons.
Gentlemen, for shame, forbear this outrage!
Tybalt, Mercutio, the prince expressly hath
Forbidden bandying in Verona streets:
Hold, Tybalt! good Mercutio!

**TYBALT under ROMEO's arm stabs
MERCUTIO, and flies with his followers**

MERCUTIO

I am hurt.

A plague o' both your houses! I am sped.
Is he gone, and hath nothing?

BENVOLIO

What, art thou hurt?

MERCUTIO

Ay, ay, a scratch, a scratch; marry, 'tis enough.
Where is my page? Go, villain, fetch a surgeon.

ROMEO

Courage, man; the hurt cannot be much.

MERCUTIO

No, 'tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church-door; but 'tis enough, 'twill serve: ask for me to-morrow, and you shall find me a grave man. I am peppered, I warrant, for this world. A plague o' both your houses! 'Zounds, a dog, a rat, a mouse, a cat, to scratch a man to death! a braggart, a rogue, a villain, that fights by the book of arithmetic! Why the devil came you between us? I was hurt under your arm.

ROMEO

I thought all for the best.

MERCUTIO

Help me into some house, Benvolio,
Or I shall faint. A plague o' both your houses!
They have made worms' meat of me: I have it,
And soundly too: your houses!

Exeunt MERCUTIO and BENVOLIO

ROMEO

This gentleman, the prince's near ally,
My very friend, hath got his mortal hurt
In my behalf; my reputation stain'd
With Tybalt's slander,—Tybalt, that an hour
Hath been my kinsman! O sweet Juliet,
Thy beauty hath made me effeminate
And in my temper soften'd valour's steel!

Re-enter BENVOLIO

BENVOLIO

O Romeo, Romeo, brave Mercutio's dead!
That gallant spirit hath aspir'd the clouds,
Which too untimely here did scorn the earth.

ROMEO

This day's black fate on more days doth depend;
This but begins the woe, others must end.

BENVOLIO

Here comes the furious Tybalt back again.

ROMEO

Alive, in triumph! and Mercutio slain!
Away to heaven, respective lenity,
And fire-eyed fury be my conduct now!

Re-enter TYBALT

Now, Tybalt, take the villain back again,
That late thou gavest me; for Mercutio's soul
Is but a little way above our heads,
Staying for thine to keep him company:
Either thou, or I, or both, must go with him.

TYBALT

Thou, wretched boy, that didst consort him here,
Shalt with him hence.

ROMEO

This shall determine that.

They fight; TYBALT falls

BENVOLIO

Romeo, away, be gone!
The citizens are up, and Tybalt slain.
Stand not amazed: the prince will doom thee death,
If thou art taken: hence, be gone, away!

ROMEO

O, I am fortune's fool!

BENVOLIO

Why dost thou stay?

Exit ROMEO

Enter Prince, attended; MONTAGUE, CAPULET, their
Wives, and others

PRINCE

Where are the vile beginners of this fray?

BENVOLIO

O noble prince, I can discover all

The unlucky manage of this fatal brawl:

There lies the man, slain by young Romeo,

That slew thy kinsman, brave Mercutio.

LADY CAPULET

Tybalt, my cousin! O my brother's child!

O prince! O cousin! husband! O, the blood is spilt

O my dear kinsman! Prince, as thou art true,

For blood of ours, shed blood of Montague.

O cousin, cousin!

PRINCE

Benvolio, who began this bloody fray?

BENVOLIO

Tybalt, here slain, whom Romeo's hand did slay;

Romeo that spoke him fair, bade him bethink

How nice the quarrel was, and urged withal

Your high displeasure: all this uttered

With gentle breath, calm look, knees humbly bow'd,

Could not take truce with the unruly spleen

Of Tybalt deaf to peace, but that he tilts

With piercing steel at bold Mercutio's breast,

Who all as hot, turns deadly point to point,

And, with a martial scorn, with one hand beats

Cold death aside, and with the other sends

It back to Tybalt, whose dexterity,

Retorts it: Romeo he cries aloud,

'Hold, friends! friends, part!' and, swifter than

his tongue,

His agile arm beats down their fatal points,

And 'twixt them rushes; underneath whose arm

An envious thrust from Tybalt hit the life

Of stout Mercutio, and then Tybalt fled;

But by and by comes back to Romeo,

Who had but newly entertain'd revenge,

And to 't they go like lightning, for, ere I

Could draw to part them, was stout Tybalt slain.

And, as he fell, did Romeo turn and fly.

This is the truth, or let Benvolio die.

LADY CAPULET

He is a kinsman to the Montague;

Affection makes him false; he speaks not true:

Some twenty of them fought in this black strife,

And all those twenty could but kill one life.

I beg for justice, which thou, prince, must give;

Romeo slew Tybalt, Romeo must not live.

PRINCE

Romeo slew him, he slew Mercutio;

Who now the price of his dear blood doth owe?

MONTAGUE

Not Romeo, prince, he was Mercutio's friend;

His fault concludes but what the law should end,

The life of Tybalt.

PRINCE

And for that offence

Immediately we do exile him hence:

I have an interest in your hate's proceeding,

My blood for your rude brawls doth lie a-bleeding;

But I'll amerce you with so strong a fine

That you shall all repent the loss of mine:

I will be deaf to pleading and excuses;

Nor tears nor prayers shall purchase out abuses:

Therefore use none: let Romeo hence in haste,

Else, when he's found, that hour is his last.

Bear hence this body and attend our will:

Mercy but murders, pardoning those that kill.

Exeunt

ACT 4: THE FIGHT

A scorching afternoon. Verona looks like it's melting. MERCUTIO fans himself with dramatic hostility.

BENVOLIO

Mercutio, can we please go home? It's boiling, the Capulets are out, and hot weather makes stupid people homicidal.

MERCUTIO

You're the homicidal one. You'd fight a man for having better hair.

Or for coughing.

Or for wearing a new coat before Easter.

BENVOLIO

If I were as quick to fight as you, my life expectancy would be about... twelve minutes.

Enter TYBALT & CREW

TYBALT

Good afternoon. I want a word with one of you.

MERCUTIO

Just one? Make it a word and a punch.

TYBALT

You're spoiling for a fight—

MERCUTIO

Always. What do you want?

TYBALT

Mercutio, you consort with Romeo—

MERCUTIO

"Consort"? What are we, a boy band?

Here's my fiddle-stick; it plays only discords.

BENVOLIO

Guys. Public place. CCTV.

Take it private or walk away.

MERCUTIO

Let them stare. I like an audience.

Enter ROMEO

TYBALT

Here comes my man.

Romeo — you're a villain.

ROMEO

Tybalt, I love you more than you understand.

I'm not your villain. Walk away.

TYBALT

Turn and draw!

ROMEO

I never injured you.

The name Capulet is as dear to me as my own.

Be satisfied.

MERCUTIO

(disgusted)

Vile submission!

Tybalt, you rat-catcher — will you walk?

TYBALT

What do you want with me?

MERCUTIO

One of your nine lives. Start with that.

Draw before mine gets impatient.

TYBALT

I'm ready.

They fight.

ROMEO

Mercutio, stop this!

Benvolio, help me break them apart—

ROMEO dives between them; TYBALT stabs MERCUTIO under his arm and flees.

MERCUTIO

Oh, fabulous. I'm wounded.

A plague on both your houses!

BENVOLIO

Are you hurt?

MERCUTIO

Just a scratch. Enough to kill me.

Ask for me tomorrow and you'll find me a grave man.

Why did you come between us, Romeo?

I got stabbed under your arm!

ROMEO

I thought—

I thought it would stop things.

MERCUTIO

It didn't.

Benvolio, get me inside before I fall over dramatically.

A plague on both your houses!

They exit with MERCUTIO collapsing.

ROMEO alone

ROMEO

Mercutio...

Dead for my sake.

Tybalt my new kinsman — now a murderer.

O Juliet, your beauty has made me soft as butter.

BENVOLIO (rushing back)

Romeo! He's gone. Mercutio's dead.

ROMEO

This day's fate darkens all days to come.

Here comes Tybalt again—

Enter TYBALT

ROMEO

Alive and proud — and Mercutio slain?

Enough mercy.

Fire-eyed fury be my guide now!

TYBALT

You who stood with him shall join him.

ROMEO

This decides it.

They fight; TYBALT falls.

BENVOLIO

Romeo, GO. Run!

ROMEO

O, I am fortune's fool!

ROMEO flees.

Enter PRINCE, CAPULETS, MONTAGUES, crowd

PRINCE

Who began this?

BENVOLIO

Tybalt started the fight.

Romeo tried to stop him.

Tybalt killed Mercutio.

Romeo slew Tybalt in grief and fled.

That's the truth.

LADY CAPULET

He lies!

The Montagues murdered my Tybalt — Romeo must die!

MONTAGUE

Romeo only did what justice required.

Mercutio was the Prince's own kin!

PRINCE

Enough.

Romeo slew Tybalt, Tybalt slew Mercutio.

Romeo is EXILED.

If he returns to Verona, he dies.

Take up Tybalt's body.

I will hear no excuses.

They lift Tybalt. The street empties, buzzing with shock.

END SCENE.

ACT 5: THE TOMB

Tomb is styled like an underground nightclub: crystal coffins glowing from within, neon roses climbing the pillars, laser beams slicing between marble cherubs. A DJ booth sits where a bier should be.

PARIS ARRIVES

PARIS slips in wearing a dramatic cape holding flowers and a portable ring light. He kneels by JULIET's glowing crystal casket.

PARIS

(softly)

O Juliet, I came to mourn you...

and also to get closure...

and possibly to film a tasteful TikTok tribute.

A sound behind him: dramatic reverb.

ENTER ROMEO (with way too much flair)

ROMEO bursts in like a man possessed — soaked from the storm, mascara smudged, shirt half-unbuttoned, the full romantic catastrophe.

ROMEO

Move.

I came to hold her one last time.

PARIS

Romeo Montague?!

You have some nerve—

They square off. Tension. Lightning. Slow-motion.

PARIS draws his sword. ROMEO draws his. They circle. Sparks. Neon. A synth drop.

ROMEO

I don't want to fight you.

PARIS

Then put the sword down!

ROMEO

I can't. I'm dramatic.

PARIS

So am I!

They lunge—

JULIET SITS UP

Lights BLAST to white. The entire crypt pulses like a heartbeat.

JULIET

(sitting bolt upright in her crystal coffin)

WOULD YOU TWO PACK IT IN

I'M TRYING TO WAKE UP FROM A NAP.

Both men scream. Like, loudly.

ROMEO

(skids across floor)

JULIET?!

You're— alive?!

JULIET

Yeah?

Hellooooo?

I took a very strong potion.

TEN HOURS OF DREAMLESS SLEEP, Romeo,

and I wake up to you two having a sword-measuring contest?

PARIS

(whispering)

She's... fine?

This is awkward.

ROMEO races to her. They crash into each other in a sparkling, theatrical embrace .

ROMEO

I thought you were dead!

I was about to—

JULIET

(interrupting, firmly)

If you say "drink poison" I swear I will ground you.

(storms off like a man whose Spotify just switched to ads)

ROMEO & JULIET finally lock eyes

(Everything goes slow-mo. Glitter floats. A single violin shrieks like it's overacting for an award.)

ROMEO

If my hand profanes your shrine,
my lips are ready to apologise.

JULIET

Sir, calm down, you're already forgiven.

Hands touch, that's normal.

Lips? Those are for prayer.

ROMEO

Then let my lips pray.

(They kiss. Fireworks explode outside in the exact shape of a heart because fate is showing off.)

JULIET

Now my lips have sin.

ROMEO

Return it then.

JULIET

Fine. (kisses him again)

Happy?

Enter NURSE, bursting through dancers like a one-woman stampede

NURSE

JULIET! Stop smooching strangers like you're auditioning for Love Island.

ROMEO

Who's her mother?

NURSE

The LADY OF THIS HOUSE, genius.

And I raised Juliet —

anyone who marries her gets the full Capulet drama package.

No refunds.

ROMEO

...She's a Capulet?

Oh this is going to ruin me.

BENVOLIO (dragging him off)

Mate, we need to leave before Tybalt does murder with jazz hands.

Everyone exits except JULIET & NURSE

JULIET

Nurse! Who was that boy?

No, the one who refused to dance!

NURSE

Oh. Him.

Don't know.

Want me to go full stalker mode?

JULIET

Yes.

If he's married, I'm moving to a convent or a volcano.

NURSE

(gasps loudly enough to disturb the pigeons outside)

GIRL! His name is ROMEO. And he is a MONTAGUE. The only son of your dad's mortal nemesis.

JULIET

(excited and horrified)

My only love sprung from my only hate—

NURSE DON'T LOOK AT ME.

NURSE

What's that then? Poetry? Emotional damage?

Are we crying or swooning?

(They exit as the party collapses into glitter, confetti, and three drunk cousins dancing to ABBA.)

END SCENE.

ROMEO

...okay I wasn't NOT going to drink poison.

JULIET

Romeo...

Sweetheart.

You need a therapist.

ENTER FRIAR LAURENCE (breathless, panicked)

FRIAR LAURENCE

(stumbling in)

Good! You're all alive! I was worried this would turn into a tragedy.

JULIET

We managed to avoid that, thanks.

ROMEO

Mostly luck. And yelling.

PARIS

And divine intervention. And glitter.

Enter PRINCE, CAPULET, MONTAGUE, guards, torches — the whole finale crowd.

PRINCE

What's this chaos?

Why is everyone alive?

Why am I not stepping over bodies right now?

JULIET

(shining like the heroine Chloe is)

Because we've all had enough of hatred.

Enough of feuds.

Enough of doomscrolling tragedy.

Tonight...

love wins.

ROMEO

And communication. That too.

PARIS

And maybe therapy.

LADY CAPULET

Juliet—

if you're alive, I'm going to faint.

MONTAGUE

Romeo—

if you're alive, I'm going to ground you till 1699.

PRINCE

Enough!

I declare the feud dissolved.

Anyone who raises a sword again will be forced into six weeks of mandatory couples counselling.

Everyone nods. Sounds fair.

ROMEO takes JULIET's hand. Music swells — a glittering, euphoric remix.

ROMEO

Then let's go, Juliet.

Not to death.

Not to exile.

But to life.

Together.

JULIET

For never was a story of more glow—

than this of Juliet and her Romeo.

PARIS wipes a tear.

Lights explode into rainbow strobes. Juliet climbs out of the coffin.

Romeo twirls her.

PARIS kisses a convenient guard.

CAPULET and MONTAGUE embrace awkwardly.

The PRINCE starts a conga line.

A banner unfurls:

“VERONA LOVEFEST — FEUD-FREE SINCE TONIGHT!”

Fireworks. Confetti storm. Dance sequence.

Curtain.

ACT 5: THE TOMB

SCENE III. A churchyard; in it a tomb belonging to the Capulets. Enter PARIS, and his Page bearing flowers and a torch

PARIS

Give me thy torch, boy: hence, and stand aloof:

Yet put it out, for I would not be seen.

Under yond yew-trees lay thee all along,

Holding thine ear close to the hollow ground;

So shall no foot upon the churchyard tread,

Being loose, unfirm, with digging up of graves,

But thou shalt hear it: whistle then to me,

As signal that thou hear'st something approach.

Give me those flowers. Do as I bid thee, go.

Sweet flower, with flowers thy bridal bed I strew,--

O woe! thy canopy is dust and stones;--

Which with sweet water nightly I will dew,

Or, wanting that, with tears distill'd by moans:

The obsequies that I for thee will keep

Nightly shall be to strew thy grave and weep.

The Page whistles offstage

The boy gives warning something doth approach.

What cursed foot wanders this way to-night,

To cross my obsequies and true love's rite?

What with a torch! muffle me, night, awhile.

Retires

Enter ROMEO and BALTHASAR, with a torch, mattock, & c

ROMEO

Give me that mattock and the wrenching iron.

Hold, take this letter; early in the morning

See thou deliver it to my lord and father.

Give me the light: upon thy life, I charge thee,

Whate'er thou hear'st or seest, stand all aloof,

And do not interrupt me in my course.

Why I descend into this bed of death,

Is partly to behold my lady's face;

But chiefly to take thence from her dead finger

A precious ring, a ring that I must use

In dear employment: therefore hence, be gone:

But if thou, jealous, dost return to pry

In what I further shall intend to do,

By heaven, I will tear thee joint by joint

And strew this hungry churchyard with thy limbs:

The time and my intents are savage-wild,

More fierce and more inexorable far

Than empty tigers or the roaring sea.

BALTHASAR

I will be gone, sir, and not trouble you.

ROMEO

So shalt thou show me friendship. Take thou that:

Live, and be prosperous: and farewell, good fellow.

BALTHASAR

[Aside] For all this same, I'll hide me hereabout:

His looks I fear, and his intents I doubt.

Retires

ROMEO

Thou detestable maw, thou womb of death,

Gorged with the dearest morsel of the earth,

Thus I enforce thy rotten jaws to open,

And, in despite, I'll cram thee with more food!

Opens the tomb

PARIS

This is that banish'd haughty Montague,

That murder'd my love's cousin, with which grief,

It is supposed, the fair creature died;
And here is come to do some villanous shame
To the dead bodies: I will apprehend him.

Comes forward

Stop thy unhallow'd toil, vile Montague!
Can vengeance be pursued further than death?
Condemned villain, I do apprehend thee:
Obey, and go with me; for thou must die.

ROMEO

I must indeed; and therefore came I hither.
Good gentle youth, tempt not a desperate man;
Fly hence, and leave me: think upon these gone;
Let them affright thee. I beseech thee, youth,
Put not another sin upon my head,
By urging me to fury: O, be gone!
By heaven, I love thee better than myself;
For I come hither arm'd against myself:
Stay not, be gone; live, and hereafter say,
A madman's mercy bade thee run away.

PARIS

I do defy thy conjurations,
And apprehend thee for a felon here.

ROMEO

Wilt thou provoke me? then have at thee, boy!

They fight

PAGE

O Lord, they fight! I will go call the watch.

Exit

PARIS

O, I am slain!

Falls

If thou be merciful,
Open the tomb, lay me with Juliet.
Dies

ROMEO

In faith, I will. Let me peruse this face.
Mercutio's kinsman, noble Count Paris!
What said my man, when my betossed soul
Did not attend him as we rode? I think
He told me Paris should have married Juliet:
Said he not so? or did I dream it so?
Or am I mad, hearing him talk of Juliet,
To think it was so? O, give me thy hand,
One writ with me in sour misfortune's book!
I'll bury thee in a triumphant grave;
A grave? O no! a lantern, slaughter'd youth,
For here lies Juliet, and her beauty makes
This vault a feasting presence full of light.
Death, lie thou there, by a dead man interr'd.

Laying PARIS in the tomb

How oft when men are at the point of death
Have they been merry! which their keepers call
A lightning before death: O, how may I
Call this a lightning? O my love! my wife!
Death, that hath suck'd the honey of thy breath,
Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty:
Thou art not conquer'd; beauty's ensign yet
Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks,
And death's pale flag is not advanced there.
Tybalt, liest thou there in thy bloody sheet?
O, what more favour can I do to thee,
Than with that hand that cut thy youth in twain
To sunder his that was thine enemy?
Forgive me, cousin! Ah, dear Juliet,
Why art thou yet so fair? shall I believe
That unsubstantial death is amorous,
And that the lean abhorred monster keeps
Thee here in dark to be his paramour?

For fear of that, I still will stay with thee;
And never from this palace of dim night
Depart again: here, here will I remain
With worms that are thy chamber-maids; O, here
Will I set up my everlasting rest,
And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars
From this world-wearied flesh. Eyes, look your last!
Arms, take your last embrace! and, lips, O you
The doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss
A dateless bargain to engrossing death!
Come, bitter conduct, come, unsavoury guide!
Thou desperate pilot, now at once run on
The dashing rocks thy sea-sick weary bark!
Here's to my love!
Drinks
O true apothecary!
Thy drugs are quick. Thus with a kiss I die.

Dies

**Enter, at the other end of the churchyard,
FRIAR LAURENCE, with a lantern, crow, and
spade**

FRIAR LAURENCE

Saint Francis be my speed! how oft to-night
Have my old feet stumbled at graves! Who's there?

BALTHASAR

Here's one, a friend, and one that knows you well.

FRIAR LAURENCE

Bliss be upon you! Tell me, good my friend,
What torch is yond, that vainly lends his light
To grubs and eyeless skulls? as I discern,
It burneth in the Capel's monument.

BALTHASAR

It doth so, holy sir; and there's my master,
One that you love.

FRIAR LAURENCE

Who is it?

BALTHASAR

Romeo.

FRIAR LAURENCE

How long hath he been there?

BALTHASAR

Full half an hour.

FRIAR LAURENCE

Go with me to the vault.

BALTHASAR

I dare not, sir

My master knows not but I am gone hence;

And fearfully did menace me with death,

If I did stay to look on his intents.

FRIAR LAURENCE

Stay, then; I'll go alone. Fear comes upon me:

O, much I fear some ill unlucky thing.

BALTHASAR

As I did sleep under this yew-tree here,

I dreamt my master and another fought,

And that my master slew him.

FRIAR LAURENCE

Romeo!

Advances

Alack, alack, what blood is this, which stains

The stony entrance of this sepulchre?

What mean these masterless and gory swords

To lie discolour'd by this place of peace?

Enters the tomb

Romeo! O, pale! Who else? what, Paris too?

And steep'd in blood? Ah, what an unkind hour

Is guilty of this lamentable chance!

The lady stirs.

JULIET wakes

JULIET

O comfortable friar! where is my lord?
I do remember well where I should be,
And there I am. Where is my Romeo?

Noise within

FRIAR LAURENCE

I hear some noise. Lady, come from that nest
Of death, contagion, and unnatural sleep:
A greater power than we can contradict
Hath thwarted our intents. Come, come away.
Thy husband in thy bosom there lies dead;
And Paris too. Come, I'll dispose of thee
Among a sisterhood of holy nuns:
Stay not to question, for the watch is coming;
Come, go, good Juliet,

Noise again

I dare no longer stay.

JULIET

Go, get thee hence, for I will not away.

Exit FRIAR LAURENCE

What's here? a cup, closed in my true love's hand?
Poison, I see, hath been his timeless end:
O churl! drunk all, and left no friendly drop
To help me after? I will kiss thy lips;
Haply some poison yet doth hang on them,
To make die with a restorative.
Kisses him
Thy lips are warm.
Yea, noise? then I'll be brief. O happy dagger!

Snatching ROMEO's dagger

This is thy sheath;
Stabs herself
there rust, and let me die.

Falls on ROMEO's body, and dies

Enter Prince

PRINCE

What misadventure is so early up,
That calls our person from our morning's rest?

Enter CAPULET, LADY CAPULET, and others

CAPULET

What should it be, that they so shriek abroad?

LADY CAPULET

The people in the street cry Romeo,
Some Juliet, and some Paris; and all run,
With open outcry toward our monument.

PRINCE

What fear is this which startles in our ears?
Search, seek, and know how this foul murder comes.

CAPULET

O heavens! O wife, look how our daughter bleeds!
This dagger hath mista'en--for, lo, his house
Is empty on the back of Montague,--
And it mis-sheathed in my daughter's bosom!

LADY CAPULET

O me! this sight of death is as a bell,
That warns my old age to a sepulchre.

,PRINCE

**This letter doth make good the friar's words,
Their course of love, the tidings of her death:
And here he writes that he did buy a poison
Of a poor 'pothecary, and therewithal
Came to this vault to die, and lie with Juliet.
Where be these enemies? Capulet! Montague!
See, what a scourge is laid upon your hate,
That heaven finds means to kill your joys with love.
And I for winking at your discords too
Have lost a brace of kinsmen: all are punish'd.
For never was a story of more woe
Than this of Juliet and her Romeo.**

If you enjoyed Bad Romance, please feel free to email the author at chrisjensenromer@hotmail.com

If you'd like to donate something, you can paypal the same address. No obligation though!

If you do run the game, do drop me a line though and tell me if it worked for you!

CJ, November 27th 2005

“Bad Romance is a wickedly clever village-hall Gothic, where vanished directors, flickering ghostlights and scandalous family feuds swirl into a delirious storm of Shakespearean mischief. What begins as a modest Romeo & Juliet production unspools into a delicious tangle of secrets, misplaced daggers, illicit passions and one of the most uproarious hauntings seen on the amateur stage. A triumph of wit, warmth and whispering chaos – part Borley Rectory, part Wodehouse, part heartfelt elegy to love in all its ridiculous forms”

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