

# **SHADOWS**

A One Act Play

**by Claire Jones**

**SchoolPlay Productions Ltd**

CARE  
and  
SHADOWS

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## **CAST**

<b>Jos</b>	<i>The Enigma</i>
<b>Debbie</b>	<i>The Victim</i>
<b>Louise</b>	<i>The Mother</i>
<b>Alison</b>	<i>The Policewoman</i>
<b>Olivia</b>	<i>The Bag Lady</i>
<b>Derek</b>	<i>The Boyfriend</i>
<b>Robert</b>	<i>The Priest</i>
<b>Helen</b>	<i>The Strange Woman</i>



## SHADOWS

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*(The play begins in darkness. As the lights come up slowly, we see DEBBIE, lying on a bed, tossing a little. There is a burst of Bach organ music. JOS comes in slowly and stands by the bed, with a paper cup. DEBBIE wakes up slowly. She feels ill .... she also has to blow her nose a lot).*

**Jos:** Debbie *(Pause)*. Debbie. Come on Debbie! Wake up please.

*(Pause)*.

**Debbie:** Mum .... mmm?

**Jos:** Wake up.

**Debbie:** I feel awful ....

**Jos:** I'm not surprised. I brought you some tea.

**Debbie:** .... Dreaming ....

**Jos:** No you're not. I haven't all day to stand here ....

**Debbie:** *(Focusing)*. Who are you?

**Jos:** You know who I am.

**Debbie:** No I don't.

**Jos:** Anyway, it's not important. Just think and you'll remember.

**Debbie:** Who are you? What do you want?

**Jos:** Nothing, except perhaps just a short talk.

**Debbie:** What about?

**Jos:** Oh come on, you know that.

**Debbie:** NO I DON'T.

**Jos:** Don't get hysterical, it won't help.

**Debbie:** Oh, God, what is all this? Where am I?

**Jos:** Somewhere safe.

**Debbie:** Look .... I don't know .... please go away .... leave me alone .... I don't know who you are .... go away .... let me think ....

**Jos:** The sooner you talk to me, the sooner you can go back to sleep. Then you'll feel better, Debbie.

**Debbie:** How do you know my name? I've never seen you before. I've never been in this room before ....

**Jos:** Your mother will be getting worried. Especially since your father went away.

**Debbie:** How do you know that?

**Jos:** Well, she was expecting you to go round for your money, wasn't she? It's

unusual for her to see you, the way you feel about each other, isn't it? You've hardly spoken for six months ....

**Debbie:** STOP IT! *(Pause)*. Just stop it! I can't stand this. You're frightening me.

*(They stare at each other).*

**Debbie:** Please let me go home. I'm frightened. I won't say anything about this ....

**Jos:** I think you will, but it's unimportant. There aren't many people who'd believe you.

**Debbie:** I'll tell Derek. My boyfriend. He'll help me.

**Jos:** Oh, for heaven's sake! Must we have those childish stories all over again?

**Debbie:** What do you mean?

**Jos:** You know what I mean. You're trying my patience, with those stupid lies. Here - have your tea.

**Debbie:** No.

**Jos:** Go on. Do as you're told.

*(DEBBIE throws the tea back at her. Pause).*

**Jos:** You're going to be sorry you did that. I can make you sorry. And I will.

**Debbie:** I'll go to the police ....

**Jos:** Do. They won't believe you. They'll check. They do, you know. They'll find out about the clinic. And your reputation.

**Debbie:** That was a long time ago.

**Jos:** Oh, I don't think that'll matter.

**Debbie:** I'll make them listen. You're keeping me here against my will, and that's against the law. My boyfriend ....

**Jos:** Fiction.

**Debbie:** What do you mean? *(No answer)*. Oh God, let me go! *(She starts to cry hysterically)*.

**Jos:** Shut up!

*(She slaps DEBBIE'S face. There is a knock at the door, and she goes to answer, and talk to someone out of sight. DEBBIE rolls over to cry into her pillow).*

**Jos:** No .... no trouble really .... I think everything's safe. Give us a minute, and have the car ready. Thank you. *(Pause)* Yes, I think it's wise. For the minute. Give her enough rope. *(She goes back and shakes DEBBIE'S shoulder)*. All right. Get up! *(Drags DEBBIE to her feet)*. You're going for

a ride, and after that .... it's up to you.

**Debbie:** Please - I'm so scared.

**Jos:** Cut it out.

**Debbie:** I want to go home.

**Jos:** Are you deaf as well as stupid? You're going. We'll just put this on first. A bit of insurance, yes?

*(She puts the blanket over DEBBIE'S head. The lights dim. Music. Then the sound of a car stopping).*

**Man's voice:** You all right, love? Here, you'll do yourself a mischief, wandering along the road like that. What's the matter? Come on, don't cry - hop in, and tell me all about it.

*(Scene changes to the living room of DEBBIE'S mother, LOUISE).*

**Louise:** You'd better sit down.

**Debbie:** Thanks.

**Louise:** I've been very worried.

**Debbie:** Have you?

**Louise:** Yes.

**Debbie:** Why?

**Louise:** Oh, for heaven's sake. You're found wandering along the road in tears, not knowing what day it is or where you've been for 24 hours .... of course I'm worried.

**Debbie:** Perhaps I've achieved something then.

**Louise:** When the police phoned .... I thought it was your father at first ....

**Debbie:** Why?

**Louise:** *(Defensive).* No reason .... I just thought ....

**Debbie:** Obviously he comes first.

**Louise:** Are you all right?

**Debbie:** OK.

**Louise:** I remembered the time before .... the clinic ....

**Debbie:** Why does everyone keep reminding me? That's all over.

**Louise:** Calm down.

**Debbie:** That's all you ever say .... calm down. Be cool. You just don't understand, do you?

**Louise:** Debbie - I never see you .... I thought you didn't want .... only when they phoned, I thought you might be ill .... that I could help ....

**Debbie:** I'm going. Back to Derek. He's the only one I can rely on these days.

**Louise:** Look.

**Debbie:** What?

**Louise:** I've been meaning to have a talk to you. (*Unhelpful pause*). Derek .... I think it would be best if you didn't see him any more .... Your father and I think ....

**Debbie:** You don't even know him!

**Louise:** He doesn't seem to be a good influence on you.

**Debbie:** Oh, I get it! You never have liked my sharing a flat with him, have you? Think all sorts of things go on .... well, I'll tell you again, and perhaps you'll understand, IT'S NOT LIKE THAT! We're friends! We like each other! And that's it!

**Louise:** He doesn't seem to be a good influence on you.

**Debbie:** I have more life with him than I get anywhere else.

**Louise:** (*Helplessly*). I just don't think he's good for you. I'm asking you to think about it.

**Debbie:** And I'm telling you no! You sit there, smugly telling me what to do with my life, and not listening to a word I say .... making all sorts of rotten suggestions about a perfectly innocent friendship, when I've just had an awful experience, when I'm still shaking .... and you can't be bothered to discuss that!

**Louise:** Debbie, I'm telling you ....

**Debbie:** Don't bother. I'm going.

(*She storms out*).

**Louise:** (*To phone*). Police please.

(*The lights fade. She faces front, she speaks disjointedly, expressing her thoughts aloud*).

**Louise:** She's a hysterical girl .... I don't know what to do with her. She took against me very early. (*She gets a drink*). We weren't affectionate .... got married because of her .... resented that .... and her father's away so much .... Middle East .... this boy, she's got to be made to forget him .... got to lead a normal life again.

(*ALISON appears, watching her*).

**Louise:** You can do something, can't you?

**Alison:** Oh, yes, I think so.

**Louise:** She always invented people to talk to, as a child. There was a school friend .... we heard everything about her .... but we found out there was no such person. She doesn't know when she's lying.

**Alison:** It's not unusual. We can take care of it.

**Louise:** Yes.

**Alison:** Complete care, that's the best thing.

**Louise:** Yes.

*(Lights dim).*

*DEBBIE'S FLAT. Littered with old carrier bags and newspapers. A chair with its back to the audience. DEBBIE heard calling.*

**Debbie:** Derek! I'm back! Oh, it's been awful .... I've got to tell you .... *(She stops)*. Where are you? Oh no, he's not gone out! Derek! *(She looks at the room)*. Oh God, we've been burgled! Derek .... are you hurt? *(She hunts for him)*. Where are all his things? There's some of mine here .... but .... *(Sits on floor)*. He's moved out? Oh, no, he'd never do that. Not without saying. *(She takes another turn round the room, frightened)*. WHERE ARE YOU!!!?

*(Suddenly the chair with its back to the audience turns, revealing OLIVIA - a grubby Bag-lady, sitting with rubbish overflowing from her lap. DEBBIE screams).*

**Olivia:** Don't do that, you made me jump dear.

*[N.B. - The text gives the important gist of what OLIVIA says, but most of the time she lapses into unintelligible gabble, indicated with the word "Gabble" - or the actress may improvise this as she pleases].*

**Debbie:** Who are you?

**Olivia:** I live here.

**Debbie:** Don't be ridiculous. This is my boyfriend's flat.

**Olivia:** Oh no.

**Debbie:** Don't be silly, of course it is. Just go now, and I won't say anything about the mess you've made.

**Olivia:** I've a right to put whatever I want in my place.

**Debbie:** Look, I don't want to get you into trouble .... just tell me what you've done with his things, and then you can go.

**Olivia:** There aren't any things here but mine. That's what it was when I moved in. Just bare boards, and walls and floors and windows and ....

**Debbie:** Don't be silly.

**Olivia:** I'm not silly. I'm not mad .... I'm important, I am, and I don't like my important rest to be interrupted .... (*Gabble, which grows louder and more aggressive*).

**Debbie:** Please .... do be quiet.

**Olivia:** Been watching this place for weeks, till the cold weather came and then I could get in. I like a bit of warm.

**Debbie:** Several weeks.... look, there's been a mistake. Listen, I was here last night .... (*Pause*). I think it was last night .... or the day before .... but ....

**Olivia:** See, you don't know. Thinks she's clever. (*Gabble*).

**Debbie:** But I WAS .... REALLY I was. And it wasn't empty. My boyfriend was here. It's his flat.

**Olivia:** Don't belong to no-one .... bare boards. Looked through the window .... bare boards .... no young men, only me ....

**Debbie:** There must be some of his things .... perhaps that'll convince you. (*She searches*).

**Olivia:** Can look all you like. Nice here .... got me other place .... no bare boards there .... but I'd rather be here .... won't have men here .... nasty loud things .... (*Gabble*).

**Debbie:** I can't find anything. There's got to be. Oh, wait .... what about the papers. We kept them together .... in a case .... birth certificates, passports .... Here they are! (*Looks feverishly through them*). Here are mine .... but his are gone! We always kept them here! (*She looks again*). He wouldn't have taken them, there wasn't any reason .... and the rent book, we always kept it in here in case we lost it ....

**Olivia:** Never was there in the first place.

**Debbie:** It was!! Of course it was! Oh, this is stupid, I'm going to ring the police.

**Olivia:** The phone didn't work. I wanted to ring [*any topical character*] and tell him [*or her*] to emigrate, but the phone didn't work.

**Debbie:** Then I'll go to the police station.

**Olivia:** Oh, they know me there. I often go there for a sit-down in the warm .... but it won't bring your man back .... if he was ever here ....

**Debbie:** He was here. We were happy. Well .... I was. He was tired .... quiet. But he didn't look like he was going to leave ....

*(And DEREK appears, sitting in a chair, staring into space. DEBBIE fetches him a can of beer, and coffee for herself).*

**Debbie:** What's the matter?

**Derek:** Why do you always ask that? Who says there's anything the matter?

**Debbie:** You're so quiet.

**Derek:** I'm tired. I've been working hard all day.

**Debbie:** Doing what?

**Derek:** Cut that out!

**Debbie:** Derek!

**Derek:** Well, stop moaning.

**Debbie:** What is the matter with you? *(Pause)*. Look, are we going to have a fun evening, just sitting here?

**Derek:** Do you want to go out?

**Debbie:** I want to talk.

**Derek:** You always want to talk. If that's your idea of a 'fun' evening, talking all night.

**Debbie:** Please tell me .... let me help.

**Derek:** What?

**Debbie:** There's something the matter .... it upsets me to see you like this .... I really care a lot about you ....

**Derek:** Yes .... I'm sorry. I've been in a rotten mood all day.

**Debbie:** Why?

**Derek:** I don't know why. Thanks for putting up with me.

**Debbie:** If there was something, you'd tell me?

**Derek:** If there was.

**Debbie:** Let's leave it then. Hungry?

**Derek:** So-so.

**Debbie:** Well I am. Shall I get some fish and chips?

**Derek:** OK, that'd be nice.

**Debbie:** Got any money?

**Derek:** Sorry .... I forgot to go to the bank today.

**Debbie:** Oh, all right, I'll treat. Shan't be long.

**Derek:** See you. *(She is on her way out)*. Debs ....

**Debbie:** Yeah?

**Derek:** Nothing ....

*(The lights dim. DEBBIE turns to OLIVIA)*

**Debbie:** You see - he was there. Where is he now? Tell me.

*(It's no use. OLIVIA takes a bottle of stout out of a bag and lapses into meaningless gabble).*

**Debbie:** Look .... speak to me .... tell me something.

*(No response).*

**Debbie:** All right, I'll go to the police. They'll sort this out. They'll have to ....

**Olivia:** See you there, ducky ....

*(Sings). We'll meet again, don't know where, don't know when ....*

*(Lights dim).*

**Debbie:** *(Heard in the dark).* Where is he?

**Alison:** Debbie? Detective Sergeant Winters. Would you like to come in?

*(They pass OLIVIA, who grabs DEBBIE by the skirt, gabbling. ALISON ignores her and indicates a chair by a desk).*

**Alison:** Do sit down. How can we help you? What's the problem?

**Debbie:** I thought you knew. My mother told you .... *(Pause).* It's everything really .... my mum .... dad .... boyfriend .... waking up in strange places .... not knowing ....

**Alison:** Have you seen a doctor?

**Debbie:** It wouldn't do any good.

**Alison:** I see. So you've got problems at home?

**Debbie:** No one listens. My mum acts strange. She hates me. She knows something she won't tell me .... I need to know. Then there's Derek. I can't find him. He's vanished. Gone missing. I want to report him as a missing person. Help me find him.

*(Pause).*

**Alison:** Could you tell some more about your mother?

**Debbie:** We used to get on well, but everything's broken down. We don't communicate any more, and we don't hear from Dad, and she won't talk about .... listen, what about Derek?

**Alison:** All in good time.

**Debbie:** Why aren't you taking any notes?

*(During the last lines, JOS approaches the desk, she knocks. OLIVIA gabbles at her, but JOS ignores it).*

**Alison:** Come in.

**Jos:** Hello, I've just come to collect Debbie. Can I take her now?

**Debbie:** No .... go away ....

**Alison:** Right Debbie, I'll probably see you again, sometime.

**Debbie:** What about ....

**Alison:** I'm sure that'll sort itself out.

**Jos:** Come on Debbie. Car's waiting.

*(They go out of the Office Area. OLIVIA begins to gabble again).*

**Olivia:** *(In the middle of her spouting).* You will take care of yourself dear, you'll forget all about it, won't you .... *(Gabble).*

*(JOS and DEBBIE go out. ALISON comes to look at OLIVIA).*

**Alison:** *(Nastily).* Watch it, ducky. You're pushing your luck.

*(LOUISE is walking along with a bag of shopping. DEBBIE leans against a wall watching her).*

**Louise:** Debbie! What's happened?

**Debbie:** What do you care?

**Louise:** Have you been to the police?

**Debbie:** Yes, but you got there first, didn't you?

**Louise:** Come inside, we can't talk here.

**Debbie:** Yes, just think what the neighbours might say.

*(They turn into the house area).*

**Debbie:** All right, I went to the police. I told them. Derek's gone missing. I was frantic, but they didn't show any interest. She just avoided the subject. Avoided me. What did you tell them?

**Louise:** Nothing that would hurt you.

**Debbie:** Well, you didn't succeed, did you. It was weird. As if Derek didn't exist.

**Louise:** (*Carefully*). Perhaps it would be better if you imagined he didn't exist.

**Debbie:** What?

**Louise:** Perhaps, if you just put him out of your mind.

**Debbie:** What's got into you?

**Louise:** You're making yourself so unhappy ....

**Debbie:** I know what it is. You're jealous.

**Louise:** No ....

**Debbie:** I've got this really nice person in my life for the first time, and you hate it. Just because you and Dad aren't happy any more, and he spends his time chatting up Arabs and charging about on planes and working flat out, and hasn't got any time for us ....

**Louise:** It isn't that ....

**Debbie:** And then I moved away, and you hated that, because people might talk. So what's your precious advice? Just forget all about it, and be a good little girl. Derek was right. He'd got you all sized up.

**Louise:** In what way?

**Debbie:** Something he said.

**Louise:** How could he know anything about me, except what you tell him? We've never met.

**Debbie:** Of course you've met him. The other night. I saw him coming out of here, on my way to the bus stop.

**Louise:** That's not so.

**Debbie:** I did!

**Louise:** Debbie, you're mistaken. I've never met him.

**Debbie:** Mum, you have!

**Louise:** Calm down! Now .... what evening was this?

**Debbie:** Tuesday .... no, no, it was Wednesday. I remember because I called at the dry-cleaner's and it was their early closing.

**Louise:** But it couldn't have been Wednesday, Debbie. That was the day your father flew off from Heathrow, and I had to take him to the airport. It took me all evening to get there and back because of the traffic.

**Debbie:** I don't understand .... (*She turns away, fidgeting*). I'm so confused .... I'm sure I saw ....

**Louise:** Leave it. Leave it for now. You'll remember soon.

**Debbie:** What's happening to me? .... You're all after me. I don't .... you won't .... Oh God, I can't stand it.

(*LOUISE moves to her*).

**Debbie:** No! Don't! Just go away - all of you ....

*(She rushes out, LOUISE is distressed. She starts after her, stops, fidgets round the room, considers phoning, doesn't, pours a drink. [This scene can be improvised by the actress]. Finally switches on the TV).*

**TV Voice:** .... balance of payments .... Massive security operations are being mounted for the state visit of the Israeli Prime Minister on Friday. He will be met at Victoria Station by members of the Royal Family and Government, in what is regarded as a goodwill mission, aimed at bringing Middle Eastern problems into perspective ....

*(Knock at the door. TV voice continues. LOUISE goes to answer. JOS comes in quickly).*

**Jos:** Going to ask me in?

**Louise:** *(Without enthusiasm).* All right.

**Jos:** Good. Now, what's been going on? You haven't been very careful.

**Louise:** What have I done?

**Jos:** Just about everything.

**Louise:** I'm sorry?

**Jos:** *(Showing a paper).* You left this where it could be found, didn't you?

**Louise:** Oh God, I didn't think.

**Jos:** Lucky I checked on you, wasn't it?

**Louise:** Look, can't you keep me out of it?

**Jos:** Oh no, we can't do that, you're too far in.

**Louise:** I haven't done anything.

**Jos:** You've got your husband to consider, haven't you? And you're putting his life in jeopardy.

**Louise:** He's doing that himself.

**Jos:** You know what sort of thing you're facing. You do know.

**Louise:** *(Tearful).* Go away! Leave me and my family alone!

**Jos:** And I told you to avoid Debbie.

**Louise:** She's my daughter.

**Jos:** Oh, for God's sake - don't come the family act with me now.

**Louise:** How do you think I feel, doing what I'm doing?

**Jos:** *(Shrugs).* Before we start weeping on each other's shoulders, let's get down to why I really came. Little matter of some money.

**Louise:** What money? I haven't got any money.

**Jos:** I know different.

**Louise:** Money's my husband's business.

**Jos:** Probably. You don't communicate much do you? But you've got enough for

what I want.

**Louise:** How much?

**Jos:** £5000.

**Louise:** You're joking ....

**Jos:** I think you'll find you have it, if you look carefully. The alternative is rather unfortunate - I take it you want to keep your family? You do understand?

**Louise:** Yes. But you see, it doesn't matter. My family aren't here anymore. They've already gone. *(Pause)*. I wish I knew where they've gone.

*(Lights. Sound of organ music. We are now in a Catholic Church. A young Priest moves about, clearing up after a service. A young woman is seen in the background, lighting a candle. [She does this rather uncertainly]. DEBBIE comes in, does the same. The two look at each other for a moment, then DEBBIE turns away to meet the Priest. The woman remains in the background for a while).*

**Robert** *(The Priest)*: Deborah. Is anything the matter?

**Debbie:** I came to talk to you. I'm sorry, I haven't been to church much, not since it happened.

**Robert:** What happened?

**Debbie:** Please help me.

**Robert:** Let's sit down .... unless you want to go somewhere quiet ....

**Debbie:** No, I like it here.

**Robert:** Tell me then.

**Debbie:** I'm going out of my mind. I must be. Total strangers know all about me. I wake up in strange rooms, with people who know everything, and I don't know anything at all - where I am .... what's happening .... there you are! Does that sound sane to you?

**Robert:** It's not like you.

**Debbie:** Everything's gone wrong.

**Robert:** A room, you said? You woke up in a room? What happened before?

**Debbie:** I was at my boyfriend's .... we were talking .... and then it's all a blank after that, till I woke up. This sounds ridiculous .... but it's true. Please believe me.

**Robert:** Go on.

**Debbie:** I can't tell you much more.

**Robert:** Did you drink - or take - anything?

**Debbie:** No, you know I'm not like that.

**Robert:** You might not have been aware of it. How did you feel when you woke up?

**Debbie:** A bit sick. Almost .... well, I had these allergy shots a few years ago, and I felt like I did then .... queasy .... my face swollen ....

**Robert:** It sounds as if you could have been given something.

**Debbie:** Then you do believe me?

**Robert:** I've known you long enough to realise you don't make things up. Have you told your parents?

**Debbie:** I tried to tell my mother .... but it was odd .... as if she didn't hear me. Told me not to make things up. Then I went to the police.

**Robert:** That was a good idea..

**Debbie:** I told this policewoman .... but it was so strange - she was just like my mother, not interested. I was reporting a missing person after all, but she didn't bat an eyelid.

**Robert:** Missing person?

**Debbie:** I didn't tell you - it's all coming out in the wrong order. My boyfriend - you've met him I think. Derek. He came to church with me a few weeks ago. Well, he's vanished.

**Robert:** Where?

**Debbie:** I was trying to tell this WPC, and then it was awful .... the woman came in .... the one who was in the room when I woke up, and she took me away - I was too frightened to resist. She took me outside and told me to keep my mouth shut.

**Robert:** And you don't know them?

**Debbie:** No I don't. But I don't like them.

**Robert:** All right, Debbie. Look - I can't do a lot, but suppose I go and see this policewoman for you. There must be an explanation.

**Debbie:** Would you?

**Robert:** Yes I could do that. Now - you look exhausted. You need some food and sleep.

**Debbie:** You really believe me?

**Robert:** I think you need someone to take on these problems for you, till you feel stronger. All right?

**Debbie:** Oh, thank you .... I'm not mad, am I?

**Robert:** I don't think so. No, Debbie, you're not.

*(ALISON appears sitting, at the other side. ROBERT goes to her).*

**Robert:** Sergeant, this girl is one of my parishioners. She came to see you the other day, and seems to have received some strange treatment ....

**Alison:** I have Debbie's file here.

**Robert:** File? Why is it necessary to keep a file on a 17 year old who's committed no crime?

**Alison:** Just routine .... ah yes, a rather disturbed young lady, I remember ....

**Robert:** What did she say?

**Alison:** It made very little sense, I'm afraid. It's part of the Police job to listen to .... well, nutters we call them .... a nuisance value of what we do ....

**Robert:** I have known this girl and her family for quite a long time. She doesn't really strike me as a 'nutter'.

**Alison:** Oh, they don't always. But there it is.

**Robert:** So, what did you do for her?

**Alison:** Listened. That was all that was necessary.

**Robert:** Well, I've listened too, and I've gained a different impression from yours.

**Alison:** Well .... perhaps you've got more time to spare. We are a very busy station.

**Robert:** Why didn't you send for her parents then?

**Alison:** We did talk to the mother. She'd been in touch before - the girl had been wandering round the neighbourhood, telling odd stories - thought she might come to us - which of course she did, so you see, we were able to deal with it.

**Robert:** She told me about a woman who came in while you were talking to her .... she was quite frightened by this person.

**Alison:** That would be our young people's volunteer worker. She's attached to this station. I'll have a word - she'll be upset to think she scared anyone. Can I do anything else?

**Robert:** One more thing. What about Debbie's boyfriend? She reported him missing - you didn't give her any help on that.

**Alison:** Boyfriend? I'm sorry. I don't know anything about that.

**Robert:** She told me she reported it.

**Alison:** There's nothing here.

**Robert:** There must be.

**Alison:** No record. Another tall tale, perhaps?

**Robert:** He's been to church with her.

**Alison:** (*Sharply*). You've seen him?

**Robert:** Yes .... I think so.

**Alison:** You're not sure?

(*ROBERT pauses, baffled*).

**Alison:** Forgive me, but - er - if the girl was sitting next to any convenient young

man, she might make you believe it was this mythical boyfriend.

**Robert:** Mythical?

**Alison:** You see, we have some doubts about the actual existence of the young man. (*Again a pause*). Look, this girl is wasting all our time with her hysterics. I do appreciate your concern, but I hope I've set your mind at rest. (*She gets up purposefully*).

**Robert:** (*Doubtfully*). Thank you ....

(*He too rises, but before he can speak OLIVIA bursts in*).

**Olivia:** (*Among other things*). It's not right my girl, it's not right, it isn't right to hold me here .... I know my rights and I want to go back, let me go ....

**Alison:** I'm busy.

**Olivia:** (*Seeing ROBERT*). Oh! Oh! Bless me father for I have sinned, it's two years since my last confession ....

**Robert:** (*Embarrassed*). Yes .... this isn't really the time or the place ....

(*OLIVIA gabbles on. ROBERT speaks to ALISON*).

**Robert:** Thank you.

(*He goes*).

**Olivia:** (*Spotting the file*). Can I see that? Can I?

**Alison:** No you can't.

**Olivia:** Why not? Go on. Go on, please, please!

**Alison:** No! And you know why.

**Robert:** (*By himself facing outward*). So you see, I went to the police, and saw the Sergeant. Putting it bluntly, they think you made the whole thing up .... I don't know .... perhaps I should tell you to forget it all, but you're so distressed. Go and see your doctor, try to pick up your life - we'll help you .... (*DEBBIE seen, with her back to him*). You're not listening.

**Debbie:** No. (*Pause*). He is real. He smokes too much. He hates coffee. He wears Denim aftershave. That's real, isn't it?

**Robert:** Debbie....

**Debbie:** Not? OK .... He ought to wear his glasses, but he's too proud. He reads Science Fiction. Listens to really highbrow music. Bites his nails ....

**Robert:** (*Suddenly*) His nails?

(*During this, DEREK has appeared on a different part of the stage. He sits - he*

*appears very tense, biting his nails. Robert stares at him, then moves down to him. Church organ music).*

**Debbie:** Of course he's real. Why are they trying to pretend he's not?

**Robert:** *(To DEREK).* Good evening. *(DEREK nods).* Can I help you at all?

**Derek:** No, I just came in. I wanted to think.

**Robert:** Oh. Well, I'll leave you to it. *(He turns away, then back in spite of himself).* Please tell me to go away if you like .... but is anything the matter?

**Derek:** *(Under his breath).* Oh, I'm in such a mess.

**Robert:** I'm sorry. *(Pause).* It could help to talk to someone.

**Derek:** *(Desperate).* I can't. I can't talk to anyone. *(Pause).* They're after me, you know.

**Robert:** *(Reaction .... a nutter?).* Yes, I see. Who?

**Derek:** Do you think I'm stupid? I can't tell you. *(ROBERT waits. DEREK goes on, in spite of himself).* I'm frightened. All the codes ....

**Robert:** You're safe here. I won't tell anyone.

**Derek:** How do I know you're not with them? I can't trust anyone anymore. I can't. *(His head goes down. ROBERT regards him worried. DEREK controls himself).* I'm not drunk, you know.

**Robert:** I didn't think ....

**Derek:** I'm not paranoid either, though the way I'm going on, I don't expect you to believe me. Where I come from there's a knife behind every corner.

**Robert:** I don't know what to do for you.

**Derek:** It is all true. They are closing in. I don't think I've got much longer .... and I saw your church .... came here once .... the music was good, Bach, I think .... and I thought perhaps there would be some peace ....

**Robert:** You're not ill?

**Derek:** No, I'm OK.

**Robert:** Have you got money? A place to go?

**Derek:** That's not a problem. Thank you.

**Robert:** Look, I have to go .... if you could just wait here .... sit quietly .... we could talk again later. I'll try to help. You're obviously distressed ....

**Derek:** No thanks. You've been good to listen to me. *(He gets up and moves away).* Thanks again.

*(Goes out. ROBERT stares after him. The music stops).*

**Robert:** I .... wonder ....

**Debbie:** Father?

**Robert:** But it could have been anyone .... Quickly! Tell me about him! Basics.

Where does he come from?

**Debbie:** Round here.

**Robert:** Parents? Family?

**Debbie:** Service family. I think they're dead now. He lived abroad for a while - Saudi .... Dubai .... in that area, I think. He settled here when he left school.

**Robert:** What does he do?

**Debbie:** Computers .... freelance .... something like that.

**Robert:** Have you got a photo?

**Debbie:** No, he didn't like them.

**Robert:** I see. Listen .... I think you're telling the truth, and there's nothing wrong with you. And yes, I think Derek's real. I wish I knew more. Where are you going now?

**Debbie:** There isn't anywhere ....

**Robert:** There's a place in the convent guest house, if that's any help.

**Debbie:** Oh yes, thank you.

**Robert:** You know the way?

**Debbie:** Yes.

*(She goes. The YOUNG WOMAN seen earlier emerges. She has been listening).*

**Woman:** Father. *(ROBERT turns)*. I think we'd better have a talk.

**Robert:** Yes. It's time, isn't it? *(She is surprised)*. I'm no fool. I've got involved in something, and I need to know more. Please come into the vestry. We won't be overheard.

*(They go aside, and we can see them talking. JOS and ALISON are on the other side).*

**Jos:** The body's been identified?

**Alison:** Yes, there were a lot of injuries but I was able to get it arranged. There's nothing else to hold us up.

**Jos:** So we can dispose of it?

**Alison:** There's no objection from the coroner. They found a Mass card, so it'll have to be Catholic.

**Jos:** After the priest came in here ....

**Alison:** Oh, I think we convinced him.

**Jos:** Let's hope so. Have you phoned her mother?

**Alison:** She's outside. Shall I get her in?

**Jos:** Might as well.

**Alison:** *(To offstage)*. You can come in.

*(LOUISE enters).*

**Louise:** They told me. In the river. Is that right?

**Jos:** Yes.

**Louise:** I didn't even believe he was ....

**Jos:** Well he was. But as far as we're concerned, she's still got to be watched. Things go on as before.

**Louise:** Please - can't you stop all this .... leave us alone?

**Jos:** Certainly not. There's far too much at stake.

**Louise:** It's so cruel ....

**Alison:** *(Quite gently).* But you realise the alternative for your daughter?

**Louise:** Yes.

**Alison:** Surely this is the better way?

**Jos:** Nothing must stand in our way, time's much too precious. Right then. You know what you have to do?

*(OLIVIA enters).*

**Olivia:** Oh yes, yes, I know what I've got to do. Lots of things, good and bad, evil and sadistic, lots of things .... *(Gabble).*

**Louise:** What does she want?

**Alison:** All right, come on darling, home time. *(Pulls at her).*

**Olivia:** *(Screams).* I won't be pulled, I won't be touched, you know that, you promised ....

**Alison:** Well will you be a good girl and walk by yourself then?

**Olivia:** Where do you want me to walk by myself?

**Alison:** *(Through her teeth).* Out of here!

**Jos:** Amazing how she haunts the place, isn't it?

**Olivia:** Oh, I'm a haunting person.

**Jos:** This is wasting time .... I repeat - do you know what to do? *(ALISON says nothing, indicating OLIVIA).* Oh, take no notice, she's probably pickled in meths. So .... all right?

**Alison and Louise:** Yes.

**Olivia:** Yes, yes, oh yes .... certainly ....

**Alison:** All right, that does it. Out!

**Olivia:** I've been thrown out of the Hilton .... so what's a small place like this? I've been thrown out of more places ....

*(She is pushed out, gabbling. The three look at each other, and the lights dim, and come up on ROBERT and the woman [HELEN]).*

**Helen:** That's the situation then .... and we're running out of time. Your information about the young man was most helpful. How long was he in here?

**Robert:** Not long. He wasn't out of my sight.

**Helen:** When he got up, did he go out straight away?

**Robert:** No. He walked about a bit. I watched him, then someone distracted me .... I didn't see him actually go, but .... wait a minute, I remember he went and looked at the organ. He said he liked music .... Debbie said it too.

**Helen:** The organ .... I wonder. May I?

*(She goes to the side stage and comes back with a pile of sheet music).*

**Robert:** Please be careful, some of it's rather old.

**Helen:** Sure. *(She searches).* Just a wild guess, bear with me.

*(She flicks through the pile and then stops suddenly).*

**Robert:** What is it?

**Helen:** I don't believe this .... look .... in the back of the Bach fugues .... this is it!

**Robert:** What you wanted?

**Helen:** The answer to everything. *(She puts it away carefully).* Thank you. Now .... the other matter I told you .... we're going to have to break this gently to her.

**Robert:** There's no mistake?

**Helen:** When a body's been treated like that, and then immersed in Thames water, there's not much chance of identification - but we think so.

**Robert:** Poor girl.

**Helen:** Can you take care of telling her?

**Robert:** Yes.

**Helen:** I have to go now, but I'll be in touch. If I can do anything for the girl, let me know. I'll be at the service - unobtrusively - in case I see anything. Here's my address. Don't phone, send a note.

**Robert:** Very well.

*(HELEN goes. ROBERT to the phone).*

**Robert:** Sister? Is Debbie there? Don't let her go out, I'm coming over. I'm afraid it's bad news.

*(Organ music. THE CAST assemble, looking down on the lower level of the stage).*

*DEBBIE stands by ROBERT, LOUISE on the other side, ALISON in the background, and OLIVIA on the side, surrounded by bags. JOS and HELEN apart at the back. They all back away, as the music ends. DEBBIE is so distraught she doesn't speak).*

**Robert:** *(Taking off his stole).* Are you all right, Debbie?

*(She doesn't answer him, and is helped offstage by LOUISE. As she passes JOS she pauses, and looks at her for a moment).*

**Robert:** *(Also seeing JOS).* May I ask who you are?

**Alison:** Father, you remember my telling you about the Social Services ....

**Robert:** I do, but I don't see what you're doing here.

**Jos:** Her mother is alarmed at her unstable behaviour, and we've been keeping a watch on her.

**Robert:** At her friend's funeral?

**Alison:** Debbie's welfare is our concern, and we're making it a priority

**Robert:** What's that got to do with ....

**Jos:** The time may be approaching when we have to consider a safe place for her.

**Robert:** But this is ....

*(DEBBIE wanders back).*

**Robert:** Debbie .... are you feeling better?

**Debbie:** *(To JOS).* What are you doing here?

**Robert:** Do you know this lady?

**Debbie:** She's the one I told you about .... she kidnapped me ....

**Louise:** I should never have let her come, but she insisted. After all, it may not be  
....

**Debbie:** Of course it is! Are you still insisting he never existed? Well you've got your way now, haven't you, because he doesn't any more. *(She manages to control herself).* Please, could you all go and leave me alone with him. Please?

*(They all drift away. Except OLIVIA, who watches DEBBIE, then approaches her, putting a hand on her shoulder. DEBBIE jumps. N.B. OLIVIA is a little more coherent in this scene, with a few lapses).*

**Olivia:** Don't cry dear. He wouldn't like it.

**Debbie:** I've seen you before. You're the nasty old bag who took over his flat ....

you were in the police station too ....

**Olivia:** I wouldn't quite use those words dear, but yes, I do seem to spend a good deal of my time ....

**Debbie:** Sorry .... upset ....

**Olivia:** Have a good cry, that's what I do.

**Debbie:** *(In tears)*. Can't help it.

**Olivia:** That's all right. *(She produces a man's tissue box, with one hanky in it, and offers it)*. It's terrible always before you realise .... such a nice young man. *(Changes subject)*. I like churchyards, I do .... they're still here, you know, still in touch with us .... you're parted from him and it hurts very much .... so I'll tell you what I'll do .... I'll have a gathering .... I do that when I like people, and I like you .... so upset .... Come and visit me at my house and I'll let you talk to him ....

**Debbie:** What do you mean?

**Olivia:** A gathering dear .... *(Gabble)*.

**Debbie:** You mean .... a seance? Oh no .... sorry. I don't believe in that.

**Olivia:** How do you know?

**Debbie:** No thank you.

**Olivia:** Want to show you my house, all my things, my little pets, don't I? Go on, go on ....

**Debbie:** No thank you.

**Olivia:** You want to lose all those bad vibrations, don't you? You had them in that flat you had .... I can help you to good things .... Thursday evenings about 7.

*(ROBERT has come back, exchanging a glance with HELEN, who is still at the back).*

**Robert:** Time to go, Debbie. Is this woman bothering you?

**Olivia:** Don't take her Father, she gets comfort from all the old stones .... and I never bothered anyone and it's three years now since my last confession ....

**Robert:** If you feel that wicked, you know where to find me. But leave her alone, she's had too many upsets.

**Olivia:** I wasn't upsetting her. *(She creaks to her feet, presses something into DEBBIE'S hand)*. Here's something to cheer you up .... *(Whisper)* .... about 7 ....

*(She hobbles away)*.

**Robert:** What did she want?

**Debbie:** To put me in touch with him.

**Robert:** A seance? Well, I hope you told her how you felt about that. What did

she give you?

**Debbie:** A matchbox. There's some hair in it, tied with a bit of ribbon.

**Robert:** Better let me have it. I'll burn it.

**Debbie:** No .... it's all right. She didn't mean anything. Shall we go?

*(She starts out. Stops, looks at the box. OLIVIA sits brooding at a table. DEBBIE goes to her).*

**Olivia:** You did come then.

**Debbie:** Whose is this hair?

**Olivia:** Ah, I thought you'd be nosy.

**Debbie:** I only came here because I wanted to know.

**Olivia:** That's not true. You loved that young man, and you didn't want to say goodbye. It's quite natural, yes it is. Sit down .... I talked to him earlier .... he wants to speak to you. You wouldn't want to disappoint him, would you?

**Debbie:** *(Blowing her nose)*. This is stupid.

**Olivia:** No. it's not .... more things in heaven and earth ....

**Debbie:** What?

**Olivia:** Shakespeare. They don't educate kids these days, do they? Sit down.

**Debbie:** Aren't there any more people?

**Olivia:** Just you and me will do .... I'll turn down the lamp, and when we've done, I'll show you all the nice things I've got ....

**Debbie:** If you live here, why did you want his place?

**Olivia:** I like empty places .... vibrations

*(DEBBIE wipes her nose, starts to speak).*

**Olivia:** Shhh .... take my hands .... there's something happening ....

*(The lights flicker and fade. Pause. OLIVIA holds DEBBIE captive. Then the sound of a high wind [or suitable effect] and DEREK'S voice).*

**Derek:** Debbie .... don't do it .... run ....

*(There is a crash and the sound stops).*

**Debbie:** That was him. I heard him. *(She struggles to her feet)*. Where is he? Let me see him.

**Olivia:** Oh no dear, you have a nice little rest now. *(Gabble)*.

**Debbie:** *(Sneezes)*. If you've got him here ....

**Olivia:** .... and all my nice things .... and my family too .... Tabby and Tiddles and Roger .... so fluffy and sweet ....

**Debbie:** Cats ....

**Olivia:** Like other people really ....

**Debbie:** I'm allergic to cats. *(She wipes her nose again)*. Wait a minute .... I'm beginning to remember .... it was here! The cats! That's why I felt so sick ....

**Olivia:** Don't get excited.

**Debbie:** It WAS here .... this room .... yes, it was *(She turns slowly to OLIVIA)*. So what have you got to do with all this?

**Derek's Voice:** *(suddenly)* Don't do it! Don't! Get away, go away, please .... get away, Debbie ....

*(DEBBIE turns towards the voice and as she does OLIVIA jabs her in the neck. She freezes. There is a pause, then OLIVIA takes her pulse, turns off a cassette recorder and goes to the door).*

**Olivia:** *(Her manner completely changed)*. You can come in now.

*(JOS and LOUISE enter. LOUISE very distressed)*.

**Jos:** All right?

**Olivia:** *(She is completely sane now)*. Just as we expected.

**Jos:** *(Looks at DEBBIE)*. How long have we got?

**Olivia:** I'll give her another shot in a minute. *(Indicates LOUISE)*. What about her?

**Louise:** I'm all right. I'll do as you said. What do you want?

**Jos:** A couple of papers to sign and we'll have her away to the home tonight.

*(LOUISE agrees silently)*.

**Olivia:** *(Sardonic)*. Some mother!

**Louise:** Oh be quiet! You've put us all through hell, now don't gloat. One day they'll get you. Let's get out of here.

*(There is a sudden crash of a door, and ALISON enters, dishevelled)*.

**Jos:** What are you doing here? I told you ....

**Alison:** Emergency! They're on to us!

**Olivia:** What?

**Alison:** They've got Hussain .... Ari .... most of the others .... they know ....

**Jos:** All?

**Alison:** All that matters. It's on the radio.

**Voice of Newsreader:** .... News just coming in, that a plot to assassinate the Israeli Prime Minister, has been discovered. He was due on a State visit tomorrow, and explosives have been found on his route to Buckingham Palace. After a raid on a house in South London, a group of men were helping police with enquiries. A young woman who recently flew into the country from Lisbon, is also wanted for questioning ....

**Jos:** *(Breaking in)*. Right! We're closing down. Get packing.

**Alison:** You're too late. The police are here.

**Jos:** How did they know? *(Pause)*. You told them!

**Alison:** Don't be a fool! They found out. Anyway, I'm finished here.

**Jos:** You won't get very far.

**Alison:** I'm not staying here. I should never have let you blackmail me .... I've lost my job .... everything, and it's your fault.

**Jos:** It was all right as long as the money was good.

**Alison:** Well, it's all over now isn't it? And I'm getting out before they come.

**Jos:** You're going nowhere.

**Alison:** Yes, I am!

*(She makes a dash for the door. Confusion, then a gunshot. She falls).*

**Olivia:** *(Putting away the gun)*. Good riddance.

**Voices off:** Can you hear me? This is the POLICE. You are surrounded. Please put down your weapons and come out.

**Louise:** What are we going to do?

**Jos:** Shut up! You're finished here. *(To OLIVIA)*. We'll go by the cellar. Take care of these two, and follow me.

**Olivia:** Right.

**Louise:** Don't .... don't hurt us ....

*(OLIVIA lifts DEBBIE'S dead weight up).*

**Jos:** I wonder how your old man will take to being a widower? We'll have to offer him some compensation.

**Louise:** Stop! Stop, please!

*(JOS backs against the door and raises her gun, as she does, ROBERT and HELEN [who is armed] burst in. ROBERT drops JOS with a karate chop).*

**Louise:** Father ....

**Helen:** *(To OLIVIA).* Put her down. And we'll have that gun .... don't argue, you've no chance of escape.

*(After a pause OLIVIA does so).*

**Helen:** Clever disguise, Sharona. You had a lot of people fooled.

*(OLIVIA spits).*

**Helen:** Pity you had to get clever and talk to the wrong people. Let's go. *(She takes OLIVIA out).*

**Robert:** I never thought that karate belt would come in useful. Are you all right? Louise .... it's all right, they know all about it - you being blackmailed. And your husband a hostage. Is Debbie ....

**Louise:** Yes. They almost destroyed her.

**Helen:** That young man of hers is one of the bravest people I've ever met.

**Louise:** Who are you?

**Helen:** I'm from the Israeli embassy. I knew Derek when he lived in the Middle east, and he came to me about this group. They're a particularly nasty lot. Sharona, our tramp friend got here a few months ago - then we lost track of her - she must have bribed the policewoman somehow - we think it's because she was heavily in debt - and they got the boss-lady into the country and they set about blackmailing and terrifying people into helping them. Derek tried to stop them, and that, of course brought in your family. The night it began for Debbie, our friend must have been outside the flat .... she knew that Debbie had been treated for nervous disorder when she was younger, and thought that was a key ....

**Louise:** What happened?

**Helen:** No-one can be sure .... but it was probably something like this ....

*(Flashback to the previous scene, when Debbie went out).*

**Debbie:** Won't be long ....

**Derek:** Debs ....

**Debbie:** Yes?

**Derek:** Nothing.

*(DEBBIE goes out. DEREK looks after her, troubled. He goes and gets some paper and starts to write. There is a knock and he lets JOS in).*

**Jos:** All right. Let's not waste time.

**Derek:** What is it?

**Jos:** Don't play games. You know.

**Derek:** I told you I don't want any part of it. I'm finished, you know that, leave me alone.

**Jos:** We don't believe you.

**Derek:** Can't you see what I'm going through? Can't you see? You don't care for anyone.

**Jos:** As long as we achieve what we came here for, it doesn't matter about anyone else. Now .... we have reason to believe that you've been in touch with the Embassy. Right?

**Derek:** No.

**Jos:** It won't help to lie.

**Derek:** I haven't. You have me watched, my phone's cut off, you KNOW that.

**Jos:** But you have. We'll find out. Until we do, please consider the effect this action will have on others.

**Derek:** Debbie .... you wouldn't hurt her? You've got her Mother and Father ....

**Jos:** We'll think about it.

**Derek:** You can do what you like to me, but don't hurt her .... we've done nothing wrong ....

**Jos:** That's the way we do things. You've been too nosy .... you must realise that.

**Derek:** Please leave them alone .... Debbie and I .... she means a lot to me ....

**Jos:** Cut out the romantic fiction please. Now tell me what you told the Embassy.

**Derek:** Nothing. I keep telling you.

**Jos:** All right, we'll try something else. *(She reaches for something in her bag, then advances on him. There is a bang of the outer door and DEREK is distracted).*

**Derek:** *(As he was heard on the tape earlier)* Don't do it! Don't! Get away, go away, please .... get away, Debbie ....

*(DEBBIE comes in with a parcel).*

**Debbie:** Derek .... DEREK! What's happening? ....

*(The lights go down and there is a scream. Then the lights come up on the Group seen earlier. DEBBIE is now sitting with her MOTHER).*

**Debbie:** I saw her. I saw her clearly. And then that was it. The next thing was waking up here.

**Helen:** They wouldn't take any risks. She injected you with the drug meant for Derek - something meant to get the truth out of him. It put you out. He got away, went to your church, Father .... then he left his last piece of information in the church music. Then he walked out of there, and they took him.

**Robert:** Why didn't they search the church?

**Helen:** Luckily for us, they overlooked the list. Here it is .... a bit of scrap paper with a list of numbers.

**Robert:** A hymn list?

**Helen:** It looks exactly like it, but it's a series of code numbers. It links up with an arrangement we made with him - we knew the message would be in the church. He got through on his computer, the one he used at work.

**Louise:** We knew he'd reached them somehow.

**Helen:** Why did you let your daughter imagine she was going insane?

**Louise:** Please, don't say that .... there was no choice .... they would have killed her! I wanted to get her away somewhere .... anywhere safe.

**Debbie:** Dad .... Is he all right?

**Helen:** Yes, he is Debbie.

**Louise:** I had to do all this .... to pretend. They'd have killed him if I'd said anything. They got him involved in a business trip .... he had too much to drink one night, and talked to the wrong people.

**Debbie:** Oh .... Mum ....

**Robert:** It's all right. It's over now.

**Debbie:** Derek ....

**Louise:** I wish I'd known him. I never met him, though you thought I had. That evening you saw him, he had been to the house, because I found a note from him .... for both of us ....

**Derek:** *(Sitting at the lower level of the stage) .....* I hope you understand that I have to do this. If it puts your husband in danger, I'm sorry, but I can't stand by and let such a terrible thing happen. I've been hard on Debbie lately, but please explain to her, if anything happens to me. I don't expect to be round much longer.... I don't know how to put it. If anything I can do to stop things happening, then I have to face the possibility. I hope you all come through safely. Please take care of Debbie and tell her I love her.

*(DEBBIE has the note. She folds it up in silence. DEREK goes).*

**Robert:** Shall we go? The police want to see us.

**Louise:** Yes .... of course.

**Debbie:** Could you just give me a minute?

**Helen:** Yes, all right.

**Robert:** We're just outside, if you want us. Try to remember the good things.

*(They go. DEBBIE holds on to her MOTHER, for a minute, then she's alone. She takes out the letter and reads it again. The lights dim, and some of the organ music is heard. Outside the window there's a movement, and then the silhouette of a young man, wearing a jacket, similar to DEREK. DEBBIE looks up suddenly at the window).*

**Debbie:** Derek?? *(And the lights go out).*

**THE END**