

Mockery Manor Christmas Special
A Midwinter Night's Dream
Written by Lindsay Sharman
Music and Sound Design by Laurence Owen

Christmas Mockery MUSIC.

MARGOT VO
Long Cat Media presents...
Mockery Manor...
'A Midwinter Night's Dream'.

Music fades.

A LORRY drives past.

INT. LORRY CAB

Christmas music plays on the RADIO.

And then, incongruously, a crow CAWS.

LORRY DRIVER
Aye. Snowing again. Not long until
we're home, Mr Munin.

The crow CAWS again. He PECKS at the radio.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)
Oi! Oi, Munin, stop it! Stop pecking
the radio, you're gonna break it!

PECK PECK PECK. The radio BREAKS, the music DIES.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)
Oh jingle balls, look what you've
done!

CAW.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)
(incredulous) You don't like Xmas
carols? Right regular Scrooge, you
are.

CAW.

Well, perhaps you'd prefer a story
instead?

Somewhat eerie MUSIC.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)

I know just the one. Tis a strange tale. Do I know any other kind? Heh heh heh. You'll know it well, Mr Munin... for you were there.

CAW CAW.

Well you shouldn't have broken the radio then, should you? What else are we gonna do! It's the story or nowt!

CAW.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)

Shut up.

We leave the sound dynamics of the lorry cab and transition to a liminal story-telling space. Intimate, it is.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)

Twas a cold winter's eve in 1994
 A winter unlike all the winters
 before.
 For a place that till now had but
 slept through the cold
 Awoke, and was merry, and glittered
 like gold!
 Yes, our Mockery Manor, all tinsel
 and holly
 Now open for Christmas, and looking
 so jolly!
 There were markets and reindeer (the
 rides were closed, mind)
 And mulled wine for a surcharge of
 £1.99
 The old Topsy Tea Rooms became
 Santa's grotto
 You could sit on his knee, then get
 totally blotto
 Come on down, said the ads, for a cup
 of good cheer
 Yes, The Mockery Midwinter Dreamland
 is here!
 But while chestnuts were roasting and
 carols were sung
 The Mockery family weren't having
 much fun
 And up in the Manor, oooh, tempers
 were fraying
 Raised voices there were - and a
 twin, she were saying...

BETTE

I won't do it. No! No no no!

INT. MOCKERY MANOR

PARKER

(exasperated) Ach, Bette...

BETTE

I've said all along, I don't want to help run this bloody park.

MARGOT

We're not asking you to. We just need you to help out today. We're so short-staffed.

PARKER

Yeah, come on Bette, don't be a dickhead.

BETTE

I'm not being a dickhead. Look, I'm sorry, but I have my own business to tend to.

PARKER

(taunting) Oh yeah, of course, your PI firm, how's that going? How many clients have you had now?

BETTE

(splutters) I don't know, I haven't counted.

PARKER

You've been open two years, and you haven't had a single client.

BETTE

I've had clients. Plenty of clients! You just haven't seen them!

PARKER

Do you have one right now, then?

BETTE

Of course not. It's Xmas, no-one hires a PI at Xmas.

PARKER

Well you know what that means? You're free to help out here! Now, see those boxes, that's lighting for the Christmas show, we're gonna--

BETTE

--No! I'm sorry Parker, I won't be punished for your cock-up. You should have hired enough staff.

PARKER

I did hire enough staff! But there's a winter vomiting bug going around!

BETTE

Is it you? Because you're making ME feel sick.

PARKER

Am I the winter vomiting bug?

He WALKS towards the boxes.

PARKER (cont'd)

Yeah OK Bette, I'm the winter vomiting bug. Good joke.

Parker GRUNTS as he picks up a heavy box.

PARKER (cont'd)

Very clever.
Here. Take this box.

BETTE

No, I'm not taking it.

PARKER

Too late.

BETTE

I'm not taking it! I'm--

PARKER

Brace yourself.

BETTE

--oof!

Bette staggers under the heavy box.

BETTE (cont'd)

Bloody hell! What's in here?? A body?

PARKER

Lamps. You can help me hang them up along the trail in the forest.

BETTE

Oh my God, I'm not working today! I told you.

Bette drops the box with a CRUNCHY JANGLE.

PARKER

(outrage) What are you doing?? Don't just drop it! If you've broken all of the lamps--

BETTE

You shouldn't have forced me to hold it! You're not my boss!

MARGOT

(loud) No, I am the boss! Me! I am the boss and you will listen and obey me! You two will stop bickering and you will work together for the good of the family! Obey me or suffer the consequences!

A beat.

PARKER

You alright, Margot?

BETTE

With respect, Aunty Margot, I can't be expected to drop everything at a moment's notice. I'm not even employed by Mockery Manor.

MARGOT

We're your family. This is a family business.

BETTE

Mmm. One could argue that family businesses tend to be a hotbed of emotional manipulation and exploitative working practices.

MARGOT

I didn't want to do this. Bette. You do not pay rent.

BETTE

(surprise) What's that got to do with anything?

MARGOT

And you have commandeered two of the finest rooms in the Manor for your Private Investigation office.

BETTE

Well yes, but--

MARGOT

I pay all bills. Including groceries.

BETTE

I know, but--

MARGOT

I bought you a car.

Beat.

BETTE

Well, yes. But I am going to pay you back! You know I will.

MARGOT

A long-lens camera. A fully equipped dark room.

BETTE

Yes, I know, I know! And I'm grateful, I really am, but Margot, please don't do this to me. Not today. I have plans! I booked a babysitter!

WALKIE TALKIE buzzes.

DAVINA VO

Mayday! Mayday!

PARKER

Oh bloody hell, what now? Yeah go ahead Davina, what's happening?

DAVINA VO

The grotto's run out of xmas presents. We've got three criers, a lot of angry parents, and someone's done a protest wee on Santa's lap.

PARKER

How did we run out of presents!

DAVINA VO
Because half the bloody town's showed
up!

PARKER
Wow. Yeah. I didn't expect it to be
this popular.

DAVINA VO
I've sent Santa on a break to buy
some time. Parker, go round the manor
and grab anything small we can wrap
up. Ornaments. Cutlery. Toilet rolls.
Heirlooms. You get the picture.

PARKER
Roger, Davina. Be right there.

BETTE
See? They've got it in hand. They
don't even need me.

PARKER
Cutlery. Ornaments. Toilet rolls.
Heirlooms. Right, I've gotta go.

Parker RUNS OFF. Opens DOOR.

MARGOT
Don't take any heirlooms, Parker!

DOOR SLAMS SHUTS.

BETTE
Well, aunty Margot, if that's
everything, I suppose I can go now?

MARGOT
Yes of course.

BETTE
Great.

MARGOT
You can go pack up your office.

BETTE
What... what do you mean?

MUSIC starts up.

MARGOT

If you won't help me with my business, then I won't help you with yours.

BETTE

Margot!

MARGOT

It's your choice, Bette.

BETTE

That's no choice! Aunty Margot, I, I can't believe you're doing this to me. I can't believe you're giving me an ultimatum. At Christmas, too. Do you really mean it?

MARGOT

Yes.

BETTE

But that's so unfair. My guest is arriving soon! What am I supposed to tell them?

MARGOT

Tell them to stay and watch the Christmas show. I wrote it, you know - 'The Tragedy of Donner and Blitzen'. Oh, it will be wonderful. T'is a promenade piece; the actors guide the audience deep into the Mockery woods. If you work hard, Bette, maybe you can finish early and catch the final scene.

EXT. FOREST

Crow CAWS in the distance.

The ACTORS MURMUR, disgruntled.

JJ

(calls) Come on, guys! Focus, please. The show's in three hours. Just one final run-through, and then I'll let you go.

More UNHAPPY ACTOR MURMURS.

JJ (cont'd)

I know, I know it's cold out here--

LUKE

And dark.

WALTER

And creepy.

JJ

--but let's just have fun with it,
yeah? OK, let's go from the top.
Walter, when you're ready.

WALTER

OK.

Beat.

JJ

In your own time.
(beat) Have you forgotten your lines?

WALTER

I was waiting for you to say
'action'.

JJ

That's movies, you don't do that in
theatre. Just... start acting.

WALTER

OK.
(beat) Now?

JJ

Yes!

WALTER

OK.
Gentles, perchance you wonder at this
Xmas show, but wonder on, till truth
makes all things plain.
(as himself) What's that actually
mean?

JJ

It's wordplay. The audience are
'wandering' through the forest,
watching the play. But they're also
'wondering' what you're talking
about.

WALTER

Should I explain that to the audience
after I say the line?

JJ

No!

LUKE

Why's it sound like that? All 'la-di-da, ooh perchance, ooh look at me, I'm not making any sense, I am from the past.'

JJ

Shut up Luke.
Walter, go ahead. From where you stopped.

WALTER

This reindeer is Donner, if you would know; and this beautiful lady deer Blitzen is certain.

JJ

So at this point, Donner and Blitzen will come out from behind their trees and present themselves to the audience.

LUKE

Where's Blitzen?

JJ

He's on guest services until 5, he'll join us then.

LUKE

This is stupid. The main character's not even here, why are we doing this. We're not even actors.

JJ

Yeah, I can see that! The real actors all have the vomiting bug, don't they. But that means you guys get a chance to strut your stuff! Better than being on waltzer duty! Or mucking out the reindeers! We get to have fun and make art!

MISC ACTOR

I can't feel my fingers.

LUKE

It's so dark, I might trip over a tree root and die.

WALTER

I hadn't even thought about the tree roots...

A MURMUR of agreement from the other actors.

JJ

Yeah, OK. Parker's bringing the lamps any second now.

LUKE

(ominous) They say there's an elephant in this forest.

WALTER

Is there??

JJ

Oh for God's sake.

LUKE

A murderous elephant that eats magic mushrooms to survive. Many a victim has been gored by its mighty tusks.

WALTER

Ohhhh.

JJ

It's not murderous.

LUKE

So you know about it, do you!

JJ

No! Yes! It's just a silly rumour. Shut up, Luke. We're losing focus again! Come on, people! Let's start at the top of the scene and run the oh I can't be bothered with this. OK everyone! Good work! Go back to the Manor, get your costumes on, run through your lines together, and I'll see you back here fifteen minutes before curtain up!

LUKE

There's no curtain. We're doing it in the forest.

JJ

(walking off) OK! Bye! See you soon!

WALTER
 (distant) But what if the elephant
 comes?

WALKING--

JJ
 (mutters) It'll be alright on the
 night, it'll be alright on the night.
 Oh my God, they're so bad. They're so
 bad. Why did I say I'd direct? So
 embarrassing.

A SNAP of a twig.

JJ (cont'd)
 (scared) What was that?
 (beat) It's nothing. It's just an
 animal. A small one. A badger.

More TWIGS SNAP.

JJ (cont'd)
 (whispers) Graham? Is that you?

BETTE
 JJ!

JJ
 Oh God! Bette!

BETTE
 Hello weirdo. Why are you walking
 through the woods muttering to
 yourself?

JJ
 Oh bloody hell. What are you doing
 here?

BETTE
 (happy) I'm on a mission.

JJ
 Ahh you're helping Parker with the
 lamps?

BETTE
 No. I'm heading to the gardener's
 cottage.

JJ
 The cottage? Why are you going there?

BETTE

To get a fire going. Make it nice and cosy.

JJ

Graham was murdered at the cottage.

BETTE

Ugh, don't. I was trying not to think about that.

JJ

So why would you go there??

BETTE

OK, I'll tell you. A friend's coming to stay. I was going to cook for them in the Manor, but Margot's breathing down my neck, so I've had to change my plans...

JJ

You're taking a friend to the murder cottage.

BETTE

Don't call it that!

JJ

I don't get it. You're not working, then? I thought Margot was gonna ask you to help out in the park.

BETTE

She did. I had to say yes, she basically forced me. But alack and alas, I've just this moment caught the vomiting bug and will have to spend the whole day locked in the bathroom. What a pity, I so wanted to work. Ooh, actually, you could back me up, make it more believable. Tell Margot and Parker you saw me puking.

JJ

I'm not gonna help you skive off!

BETTE

JJ, I can't just abandon my friend. They've come all the way from Germany.

JJ

Germany? Who do you know from Germany? Is it... is it Gretchen? No! Why didn't she tell me she was visiting?

BETTE

Because she's only visiting me.

JJ

Oohhh! Is this a date??

BETTE

Maybe. We haven't officially called it a date, but who the hell comes all that way if it's not, don't you think?

JJ

I didn't know you two kept in touch!

BETTE

Remember when I took that holiday to Berlin last year? I went to one of her gigs. And then we became pen pals. And now she's coming here, and we're going to fall in love and run away together!

JJ

You're so secretive, Bette, I can't believe you didn't tell me about this. Ooh, I've got an idea: maybe Gretchen could help us out! You could work together, that would be... romantic?

BETTE

JJ, I am not inviting her all the way here for fun times and possible romance and then putting her to work. Ooh, look at the time, she'll be here soon!

JJ

But Bette, please, the park, it's carnage out there.

BETTE

Oh, you'll survive. You've been through worse! Toodle-oo sis, wish me luck!

Bette moves off.

JJ
(sighs) Really??

INT. PARK

Christmas MUSIC plays through speakers.

CROWD NOISE.

Paul on the TANNOY -

PAUL
Ho ho ho and festive greetings one
and all! My name's Paul and it's my
pleasure to welcome you to the
Mockery Manor Midwinter Dreamland
Experience!

A CROWD CHEERING SOUND EFFECT that cuts off abruptly.

PAUL (cont'd)
Nice little sound effect there.
And what a magical occasion this is:
the very first time that Mockery
Manor has thrown open its gates at
yuletide! Normally, only lunatics and
drunks would be outside on a day like
this, but looking at the crowds
today, it turns out quite a lot of
you think it's a great idea! And
we're so happy you do.
A quick rundown of all the wonderful
experiences open today: next to
Santa's grotto you can find his
magical reindeer, go and give them an
apple! But do be careful though, they
are vicious, you do not wanna get a
nip from one of them, cos, well,
they're probably carrying diseases.
Now the ice rink in front of the
manor is dangerously over-crowded
right now, so you might have to wait
before you skate, but that's OK
because the Christmas market is
selling a wide range of hot spicy
drinks, candy canes, and pretzels -
which is just salty bread. Eh. Some
people seem to like it.
Now, a lot of people have been asking
when they can go on the
rollercoasters and sundry rides,
and... you can't. Sorry.

The CROWD gives a disgruntled NOISE.

PAUL (cont'd)

This is a midwinter Xmas wonderland experience, not a normal theme park day, and we don't have the staff to open the rides. But what we do have is a Xmas play for the whole family; 'The Tragedy of Donner and Blitzen'.

Paul triggers the CROWD CHEERING sound effect again.

PAUL (cont'd)

Eyyy.
And in fact, I am playing one of the titular roles - don't get excited, 'titular' means the name is in the title. Not that I'll be showing my mammaries. Not in this weather!

Paul triggers a BA DUM TISH sound effect.

PAUL (cont'd)

Haha, oh dear me.
I'm playing Blitzen. It's the male romantic lead.
The play starts at the edge of the Mockery woods behind the Manor at 7pm sharp, and each scene occurs at a different place along the forest trail! So come see me not exactly tread the boards - more like tread the twigs and fox shit--

SHOCKED CROWD NOISE.

PAUL (cont'd)

Sorry, fox 'poo'! Sorry about that.
Merry Xmas, one and all!

INT. SANTA'S GROTTTO

Xmas music.

PARKER

There we go Father Christmas, some lovely new presents for the kiddies.

He DUMPS a load of presents on the floor.

SANTA

About bloody time.
(MORE)

SANTA (cont'd)
 Ho ho ho. Hello small child, what's
 your name?

DAVINA
 Behind the tinsel rope, please!

PARENT
 Excuse me, we've been here 40
 minutes, I think we're next.

PARENT 2
 There's four of you, I've only got
 one kid, we should go next.

DAVINA
 I said move! Or it's a lump of coal
 for all of ya!

PARENTS GRUMBLE.

DAVINA (cont'd)
 I said move back!

PARKER
 Oh my God, look at them, they're like
 a zombie horde.

JJ rushes in, grabs Parker.

JJ
 (whisper) Parker, there you are. We
 need to set the lamps along the
 forest trail.

PARKER
 Oh bollocks, I got distracted, I'll
 come and do that now.

JJ
 I can help.

PARKER
 Hang on, before we go - (whispers)
 Davina! Davina!

DAVINA
 What is it? I'm busy.

PARKER
 We need someone to restock the
 market. The eggnog stall's run out of
 eggnog, and the pretzel stall's run
 out of pretzels.

(MORE)

PARKER (cont'd)

And the pigs in blanket stall's run
out of pigs in blankets--

DAVINA

Yeah, I get it. But I can't leave the
grotto, Parker, I'm Peaseblossom the
elf. If I'm not here, the parents
start attacking one another.

JJ

I can tell the cast of the play to
come help.

DAVINA

Great. Go on! Go go go!

Parker and Bette leave; the door BELL jingles as they pass
through. They WALK with great haste through the park.

PARKER

I'll go do the lights, you go get the
actors. Bette can help me in the
forest. Where is she, have you seen
her?

JJ

Yeah. I have.

PARKER

What? What is it? JJ?

JJ

(sighs) She's pretending she's got
the vomiting bug to get out of
helping.

PARKER

What??

JJ

She's sneaking out to go on a date.
She thinks that's more important.

PARKER

She's going on a date?

JJ

Yeah!

PARKER

I can't believe it. Who with?

JJ
Remember Gretchen. From
Dunkelschloss?

PARKER
Gretchen? What, pigtails??

JJ
Yeah.

PARKER
Bette fancies Gretchen? I can't
believe it. They're going on a date?

JJ
It's so unfair. She's so selfish.
Leaving us to work our arses off,
while she runs away from her
responsibilities! Who does that??

PARKER
Has she fancied Gretchen this whole
time, then?

JJ
Huh? Oh. Yeah, I guess so.

PARKER
Bloody hell. That's two years. I
don't believe it!

JJ
Why are you so upset?

PARKER
I'm not upset! I'm livid!

JJ
That she's skiving off work, or that
she fancies someone?

PARKER
(splutters) That she's skiving,
obviously! I couldn't give a log if
she's got a date! Pbbt. Who cares?
Not me. Why would I? She's a very
annoying person who only thinks of
herself. In fact, you know what, I'm
gonna go tell her that. Yeah! Where
is she?

JJ

The gardener's cottage. But Gretchen might be there by now. We can't just burst in, can we?

PARKER

We? You don't have to come. Nah, I'll just go, tell her she's being wrong-headed, and she'll see the error of her ways. Happy days. Later's gators.

Parker runs off.

JJ

But... is there time for this?
(calls) Parker!

I can't believe it. Parker fancies Bette??

EXT. THE FOREST

The FLAP FLAP FLAP, CAW CAW CAW of Mr Munin descending.

LORRY DRIVER

Welcome, good crow.

The crow lands on a branch.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)

Let's hear it. What are they up to?
Report in full, Mr Munin.

CAW.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)

It's not creepy. Why shouldn't I keep tabs on them? I'm just curious, that's all.

CAW CAW.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)

No. Really? Heh heh! What did she say to that? Oh dear oh dear! Oh, I bet he didn't like that!

CAW CAW CAW!

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)

Dear me, there's none so blind as those who will not see. And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind.

(MORE)

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)

Tell me Mr Munin, do you think Bette's ever been open with Gretchen, or does she expect her to be a mind-reader? And JJ, flipping heck, pining after that lanky twat. I tell you what the problem is, she's terrified of doing anything reckless nowadays. One extreme to the other, that girl. But maybe she's right to keep schtum; Parker can't seem to acknowledge where his heart truly lies. (tuts) All so scared of getting hurt. Fear is the enemy of love, Mr Munin.

CAW CAW.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)

Oh, well I'm very sorry! Is this a waste of your precious time? Should we be meddling in the affairs of the high and mighty, then?

CAW.

All human life is important, thou knows, even these silly buggers. (sighs) They're so young, and they've been through so much. I just want them to have a nice Christmas.

CAW CAW.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)

Bloody hell, you're cynical.

CLINK CLINK.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)

Now then, I have a little Xmas gift for you to give our foolish lovers. Mr Munin, you're to take this here magical juice and anoint the eyes of Parker and Gretchen. But don't do it all willy-nilly! Thou must be careful, for once their eyeballs are swimming in't juice, the next thing they spy is the one they fall in love with. So make sure you deploy the juice at the precise moment each of them is looking at the person who suits them best. Got it?

CAW.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)
 Good. Nice and simple. Can't see that
 going wrong.

CAW CAW CAW.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)
 I won't listen to anymore of your
 negativity, Mr Munin! It's Xmas, a
 time of joy and goodwill. So hop to
 it!

CAW CAW. FLAP FLAP FLAP.

INT. COTTAGE

DOOR OPENS. Smoooooth MUSIC on the record player.

The two WALK in.

BETTE
 Come by the fire, Gretchen. It's warm
 over here.

GRETCHEN
 Yah? Good. Brrrr. It's so cold. This
 cottage smells of damp. And what's
 that big dark stain on the porch?

BETTE
 Um, nothing! Probably just rot? Look,
 I brought a bottle!

GRETCHEN
 Champagne? Wow.

BETTE
 Let's open it.

POP.

BETTE (cont'd)
 From the Mockery cellars. Margot
 won't mind. I do a lot for her, you
 know. She's very grateful.

GRETCHEN
 So when is JJ coming?

BETTE
 She isn't. She has to work, bless
 her.

GRETCHEN

Oh. We should go see her. She's in the park right now, yah? Let's go!

BETTE

No! Gretchen, we can't. We have to stay here. I sort of pretended I had a vomiting bug to get out of work.

GRETCHEN

Oh!

BETTE

I didn't want to leave you twiddling your thumbs on your first day here.

GRETCHEN

I wouldn't mind. I can practice some of the new songs for the gig tomorrow. Hey, thanks for offering to put me up.

BETTE

My pleasure. It's so good to see you.

GRETCHEN

Yah. How do we say it? 'Bottoms up'?

BETTE

Cheers.

GLASSES CHINK.

BETTE (cont'd)

I've really enjoyed our letters. Writing to each other, it's felt almost... old fashioned.

GRETCHEN

Yah, yah, it was nice. It was good to practice my written English.

BETTE

Oh. Great.
Is that all it was?

GRETCHEN

Uh. Bette. Am I sensing something?

BETTE

Oh, er...

GRETCHEN

Do you need to say something to me?

BETTE

No. Well, maybe. Ohh. Yes. Yes,
actually. Gretchen, the thing is, I--

The DOOR SLAMS open. The needle on the record player flies
off, the MUSIC BUZZES to a stop.

PARKER

Hello Bette!

BETTE

Parker!

GRETCHEN

Parker! Hey, how are you!

PARKER

Alright Gretchen, long time no see.

BETTE

What the hell are you doing here?

PARKER

(whispers) What am I doing here? What
the hell are YOU doing here! You
agreed to help!

BETTE

Under duress! As you can see, I have
a guest, Parker, who's come all the
way from Germany.

GRETCHEN

Actually I was just in Brighton.

BETTE

You were?

GRETCHEN

I had a gig. The band are still there
in a B&B. Ooh, maybe I should tell
them to come to the park? Super fun!

PARKER

Yeah yeah! That's a great idea,
Gretchen, you tell 'em to come right
now. They could be here in two hours.

BETTE

No!

GRETCHEN

Why not?

BETTE
Because... because...

JJ enters.

JJ
Knock knock! Just me. Hi guys.

BETTE / PARKER
Oh, what the hell.

GRETCHEN
Hiiii!

JJ
Hi Gretchen!

PARKER
(sotto) JJ, why are you here? I said
I was handling it.

GRETCHEN
Come! Come come! Have a drink with
us! Bette said you had to work today.
Are you on a break?

PARKER
No, she is not! JJ, you should be in
the park!

JJ
Me?? What about you??

PARKER
Me? What about Bette!

BETTE
How is this my problem!?

PARKER
I'm sorry, but none of us can be here
right now. No cosy little love nests
while the rest of us slog our guts
out, I'm afraid.

GRETCHEN
(confused) Love nest?

JJ
Parker, I'm not sure we have to a
right to ruin this for them.

PARKER
What??

JJ
I think we should go.

PARKER
You're the one who said it wasn't
fair, that they--

The crow FLIES IN with much FLAPPING and CAWING.
Everyone SHRIEKS.

PARKER (cont'd)
Jesus Christ!

BETTE
Guys, there's a bird in the house!

GRETCHEN
Oh my God! It's huge!

PARKER
Where the bloody hell did that come
from??

JJ
How did it get in here??

PARKER
Bloody hell, it's dive-bombing us!

JJ
How is this happening AGAIN?

GRETCHEN
Is there a nest in here??

Magical SPLAT.

PARKER
Oh my God, it's shat in my eyes!

BETTE
Oh yuck! That's disgusting!

SPLAT

Arg! It got me on the arm!

PARKER
There's bird shit in my eyes!

JJ
It's coming at me! Hungh! (lunges
sideways)

JJ (cont'd)
It missed! Oh no. Gretchen, duck!

GRETCHEN
Oh no!

Magical SPLAT.

GRETCHEN (cont'd)
Agh! My eyes! It went in my eyes!

PARKER
Gretchen, don't open your eyes, it'll eat right through 'em! Have you seen what it does to a car?!

BETTE
JJ, open the door, I'll chase it out with this poker!

JJ
OK!

JJ OPENS the door. Lots of CAWING, FLAPPING etc.

BETTE
Shoo! No, not that way, this way!

GRETCHEN
Will I go blind??

BETTE
Dammit, you stupid bird!

JJ
Here, Gretchen, use my scarf to wipe your eyes. Parker, you take the other end.

GRETCHEN
Yes, I've got it! Thank you.

BETTE
This way, you flappy bastard!

CAW CAW.

PARKER
Where's the scarf? JJ, where's the scarf?! Help me, put it in me hands!

JJ
Here, Parker. Here.

JJ (cont'd)
Does it sting, Gretch?

GRETCHEN
(surprised) No, not really. I think
it's safe to open my eyes...

MAGICAL SHA-WING.

GRETCHEN (cont'd)
Ohhhh! Ohhh.

JJ
How does it feel?

GRETCHEN
It feels... It feels... ohhhh my!

PARKER
Can't believe this. Bird shit in me
bloody eyes!

JJ
Parker, come here, let me have a
look.

GRETCHEN
JJ... you saved me. Again!

BETTE
(background) Ha-yah! Stupid bird!

JJ
Open your eyes Parker, let me see.

PARKER
Don't wanna.

JJ
Just do it. Come on!

PARKER
Fine.

He opens his eyes. Magical SHA-WINGGGG.

PARKER (cont'd)
Oh my gawd...

JJ
Oh, you're fine. Your eyes aren't
even red. They look kind of sparkly,
actually.

PARKER
Because I'm looking at you!

GRETCHEN
What is this? So many feelings!

PARKER
Yeah so many feelings...

JJ
Are you two alright? You're being a bit weird.

PARKER
JJ, I need to tell you something...

GRETCHEN
No. JJ, *I* need to speak to you.

BETTE
(shouts) And stay out!

CAW CAW! The door SLAMS.

BETTE (cont'd)
I did it! Did you see? I got the bird out!

PARKER
Thank you for the scarf, JJ.

JJ
That's OK.

BETTE
Guys! I got the bird out! No-one was watching?

PARKER
This scarf smells of your neck.

GRETCHEN
Yah! Body Shop, white musk.

BETTE
Phwoo, out of puff now! So how are you two doing? How are your eyes?

PARKER
I have never seen more clearly in my life.

GRETCHEN
Me too.

BETTE

Oh. Good.

JJ

Alright, erm, I think I'm gonna go.

PARKER

I'll come with you!

JJ

Cool. Bette, Gretchen, sorry for intruding. You carry on.

GRETCHEN

You're leaving?? You can't leave!

JJ

Yeah. Sorry Gretch, wish we could stay. Bye guys!

They head out.

PARKER

My love!

BETTE

Bye! Thanks for bringing a rabid bird into the cottage.

PARKER

My love! Where dost thou go in such haste?

GRETCHEN

Wait! I'm coming with you.

BETTE

You want to go with them? But they have to work. Stay here, with me.

GRETCHEN

I have to go.

Gretchen RUNS out.

BETTE

Gretchen?? Dammit. Dammit!
Gretchen, wait for me!

FOOTSTEPS.

EXT. FOREST

CAW CAW.

LORRY DRIVER

Good work, Mr Munin! She chased you out, did she? She's a feisty one! Oooh, they must be having a lovely time now!

CAW!!!

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)

You what?? They *both* looked at JJ!? For pity's sake! Did you sabotage this on purpose??

CAW CAW.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)

It was not a stupid plan!

CAW.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)

Well who's fault were it if not yours!

CAW CAW CAW CAW CAW.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)

Union? What do you mean, you'll tell the union?

CAW CAW. FLAP FLAP FLAP.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)

Fine. You go file a complaint! See if it stands up! It won't! I'll just undo all your mistakes myself, then, shall I? At least then I'll be assured of a good job!

SPLAT.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)

What the! Bloody hell! Did you just crap on me? You little bastard.

EXT. THE PARK

The lovers are walking through the park.

JJ

I have to go check on the actors.

PARKER

OK OK! I shall come with you.

JJ

What? No, Parker, you need to do the lamps! We're running out of time. The play starts in an hour!

PARKER

I don't care about the play. I don't care about this park.

JJ

What?

PARKER

It can all go to hell. As long as we're together.

JJ

Is that a joke? I don't get it.

Gretchen RUNS up.

GRETCHEN

(pants) You walk so fast! JJ, look, an ice rink! Let's go skate together.

JJ

I can't Gretch, I have to work.

BETTE

(distant) Gretchen!

JJ

Look, here comes Bette. Skate with her.

PARKER

Yeah, go skate with your girlfriend and leave us alone.

JJ

Parker!

GRETCHEN

I beg your pardon?

JJ

Don't be rude!

PARKER

Sorry!

Bette RUNS up.

BETTE

Gretchen, can we please go back to the cottage.

GRETCHEN

Bette is not my girlfriend! I am single and ready to mingle...

BETTE

'Girlfriend'?

GRETCHEN

...with a very specific person.

BETTE

Did one of you just say something to Gretchen about me?

GRETCHEN

Parker said you were my girlfriend. But you're not.

BETTE

Parker! Why did you say that??

PARKER

Can you two just bugger off? JJ and I need some privacy.

JJ

No we don't.

PARKER

But we do, babes. I can't keep this in any longer. It's time we accepted, no matter how scary it may be, that we're destined to be together.

JJ

What the f--

GRETCHEN

No! JJ doesn't want you! She wants me!

JJ

What??

BETTE

(heartbroken) Gretchen! Don't tell me you like JJ??

GRETCHEN

Of course I do. She saved my life in Dunkelschloss. If it wasn't for her, that gangster would have shot me.

BETTE

If it wasn't for JJ, that gangster wouldn't have been there in the first place!

GRETCHEN

No. She saved me.

BETTE

Unghhh!

PARKER

JJ saved us all! I owe you everything, JJ, and I will gladly spend my life in service to you.

JJ

Is this some kind of prank?

GRETCHEN

You're a hero. *My* hero.

BETTE

Oh please! JJ's a hero like a cornered fox is a hero!

JJ

Bette!

GRETCHEN

Your sister is clearly jealous of you, JJ. So she should be.

BETTE

Gretchen, you can't be serious.

PARKER

Get lost, Gretchen! JJ barely knows who you are. But we have a history, don't we darlin?
The Origin Showcase.

JJ

Oh my God, shut up, Parker!

PARKER

It was the most sensual experience of my life.

JJ

Parker! Shut up!

PARKER

I've thought about it so many times since. Late at night. I know you have too.

BETTE

The Origin Showcase? Is that where you two had your dirty shag? Ugh. Thanks for the mental image.

GRETCHEN

JJ, you slept with this lanky fool?

PARKER

What did you call me?

GRETCHEN

But this was in the past, yah? So you and I, we are free to explore our feelings.

JJ

(loud) OK, you can all stop now! Very funny guys! Very funny. Yeah, I see what you're doing.

PARKER

Babe?

JJ

Poor JJ, always single! Let's all pretend we fancy her! When did you all get together and plan this, then? Bette, did you put them up to it?

BETTE

Me? I haven't done anything!

PARKER

No babes, I love you, it's--

JJ

(shouts) Let me talk! For once, just shut up!

I can't believe any of you would think this is funny. Yeah, OK, I've been single for years.

(MORE)

JJ (cont'd)

Is that a joke to you, then? Yeah, I've never had a proper boyfriend. But how do you open up to someone about your messed-up life when you know it'll scare the crap out of them? You can't! So yeah, looks like I'm gonna be single forever! And if you think that makes me... what, a loser? Laughable? Then you're a bunch of real shitbags, and I expected better from all of you! Especially you, Bette.

Bette SPLUTTERS.

JJ (cont'd)

And you, Parker, I really liked you.

PARKER

You did??

JJ

But I suppose you're trying to impress Bette, is that what this is? Well. That is... really horrible of you, actually. I trusted you. You can all just sod off!

JJ WALKS off, CRYING.

PARKER / GRETCHEN

JJ! Wait! This isn't a prank! I love you!

GRETCHEN

You hurt her! How dare you hurt my JJ!

Gretchen SLAPS Parker, who SQUEALS.

PARKER

Get off me you crazy cow!

A peculiar AMBIENCE SWELLS for a second, and then--

LORRY DRIVER

(echoing, godly) Freeze!

The park is PLUNGED INTO SILENCE. The humans FREEZE. A strange HUM underpins the lorry driver's words.

We hear his FOOTSTEPS.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)
 Bloody hell. What a mess. What have I
 done?
 Where's that bloody antidote...

POP of a cork being removed from a GLASS BOTTLE.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)
 You first, Parker. Just a drop in
 your peepers...

MAGICAL ZZZZING.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)
 There. Sorry about all this, lad.
 Still, she told you she liked you.
 That's good, in't it? Except now she
 hates you, of course. Oh bloody hell.
 You next, fraulein.

MAGICAL ZZZZING.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)
 At least you're going home soon. You
 never have to see these three again.
 They have to live together! Eeee. I
 think I might've ruined things
 between the twins. Just when they'd
 grown close again.
 Ohhh, I can't leave it like this. Let
 me see, what else have I got...

The TINKLE of GLASS BOTTLES.

Aha. Aye, this'll help 'em forget.
 This'll do nicely.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)
 One for you, JJ.

MAGICAL ZZZZINGS.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)
 And Bette. And... three, four.
 There. All done. But perhaps...
 perhaps I shan't wake you up right
 now. Someone has to put those lamps
 along the forest trail, and there's
 very little time before the show
 begins. Aye. I shall do it. It shall
 be my penance.

CAW CAW. FLAP FLAP FLAP.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)
 Mr Munin? You're back. I think I owe
 you an apology. Good Mr Munin, I
 should've listened to thee.

CAW.

Well. Very gracious of you, sir.

CAW CAW.

The presents? And Margot? What a
 splendid idea. Aye, that's a proper
 gift, that is. You go and do that,
 there's a good lad.

CAW CAW, FLAP FLAP. He exits.

And as for me, to the forest I go,
 with lamps in tow.
 And the forest, my lovers, is where
 thou shalt--

EXT. THE PLAY, FOREST TRAIL

His voice ECHOES in a dreamy, god-like sort of way--

LORRY DRIVER
 --Awake!

A magical time jump. The play is in progress.

LUTE MUSIC plays.

WALTER
 (distant) This lantern lights the way
 and presents to you the final scene
 of our good play.

JJ
 (woozy) Ohhh. What happened?

BETTE
 (woozy) I'm seeing double. Did I
 drink too much?

PARKER
 (woozy) Why are we in the forest?
 How'd we get here?

GRETCHEN
 (woozy) I think I'm gonna be sick.

AUDIENCE MEMBER
 Shhhh! I'm trying to watch the play!

JJ
 (confused) The play?
 (realisation) The play! Oh my God!
 It's started??

AUDIENCE MEMBER
 Shhh! Have some respect for the
 actors!

PARKER
 Yeah yeah, alright.
 Ouch! JJ! Why'd you pinch me?

JJ
 (confused) To see if I'm asleep?

BETTE
 Were we arguing about something?

GRETCHEN
 I remember... uh, it's slipping away.

JJ
 The lamps are up. Look! The lamps are
 strung from the trees. Did you do
 that, Parker?

PARKER
 I... I must've done.

AUDIENCE MEMBER
 Shhhhhhhh!

BETTE/JJ/PARKER/GRETCHEN
 Sorry!

AUDIENCE MEMBER
 Shhhhhhhh!

BETTE/JJ/PARKER/GRETCHEN
 (whispers) Sorry!

PAUL/BLITZEN
 My Donner, she is gone... to join
 Santa's elite team of magical
 reindeer. Gone!

PARKER
 They gave Paul the main part??

PAUL/BLITZEN
 Perhaps I will find the courage to
 follow her.

PARKER

Bloody hell.

PAUL/BLITZEN

Come, reins! Come, trusty harness, my
breast imbue! Donner, I come to you!

MARGOT

The end!

The LUTE MUSIC stops.

PAUL

What?

MARGOT

Wonderful! Excellente!

PAUL

Hang on a minute!

MARGOT

Clap! Everybody clap, please.

The audience CLAPS.

CHILD

Mummy, that play was weird.

WALTER

But it's not over yet. I haven't done
the epilogue!

MARGOT

It doesn't need one, you've done
enough! More than enough. Well done
everyone! You brought my words to
life. From dream to reality.

PAUL

But I wanna do the song.

BETTE

(whisper) Shit! Margot's here! Oh
God, she's seen me! Shit! She's
walking over! What do I do??

PARKER

Alright Margot.

MARGOT

Hello Parker. Hello JJ.

BETTE
Hello aunty Margot.

Beat.

MARGOT
Bette.

BETTE
Your play was excellent. I feel much better, by the way. I had the vomiting bug, but--

MARGOT
You were sick, Bette? Well. One would never know. You've all worked very hard today.

PARKER / BETTE / JJ
You what?

MARGOT
The Xmas Market is fully restocked. The play came together nicely. And the new grotto presents, where on earth did you find them? Train sets, dolls...

PARKER
Really?

MARGOT
Ninja Turtles.

PARKER
Ninja Turtles??

JJ
Everyone's... happy?

MARGOT
Oh yes. The Midwinter Dreamland Experience is a total success. We shall have to do it again next year.

PARKER
Love to.

MARGOT
Or maybe a permanent Xmas feature. Yesss.

PARKER
Christmas Town?

MARGOT

Perhaps. Anyway, right now you should
all relax. Go have some eggnog! Stay
out as late as you want.

Margot walks off.

PARKER / JJ / BETTE / GRETCHEN

(weirded out) Bye Margot.

MARGOT

Have fun, children.

A BEAT. Parker gives a single COUGH. Awkward.

JJ

How about we just... never mention
this again?

BETTE/PARKER/GRETCHEN

Yeah. Good idea. Brilliant idea.
Can't remember much anyway.
Champagne? Eggnog?

Their voices become BLURRY, DISTANT...

INT. LIMINAL SPACE

An EERIE HUM.

A Mockery / Silent Night hybrid plays.

LORRY DRIVER

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended,
That you have but slumber'd here
While this audio did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream,
So, good night unto you all.

CAW CAW CAW

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)

It is not plagiarism! It's out of
copyright anyway, I can do what I
want with it. And Bill wouldn't mind,
would he? He had a sense of humour.
All them sex jokes.

CAW CAW.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)
No! You knew him??

JAUNTY music.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)
You're joking! What was he like?

CAW CAW CAW CAW.

LORRY DRIVER (cont'd)
Really?? With a banana? Haha! He was
a class act, wasn't he, old Bill! Oh
Mr Munin, I can't believe you let me
tell that story when you were sitting
on the fact you knew Shakespeare!

CAW CAW CAW CAW CAWWWWW.

The end.

Merry Christmas, folks!

CREDITS

You have been listening to Mockery
Manor: A Midwinter Night's Dream.
Written and directed by Lindsay
Sharman with music, sound design and
editing by Laurence Owen.

Hayley Evenett was JJ and Bette,
Laurence Owen was Parker, Paul, Luke,
the mysterious Lorry Driver and
additional voices,
Lindsay Sharman was Margot, Davina
and additional voices,
James Ducker was Walter
and Abbie Eastwood was Gretchen and
additional voices.

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(MORE)

CREDITS (cont'd)

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From Lindsay and I, and the cast of Mockery Manor, we'd like to wish you all a very merry festive season, and a happy new year.