



Spooky Action at a Distance

Eve Leigh



Characters

MALIK
BOJANA
ELLIOTT
OFFICER
KATIE
WENDY

Place

Largely in the bit of south-east Kent that's within sight of Calais, but also right here and right now.

Time

30 January 2016, during the thirteen or so hours it takes for Katie's dad to travel from Vancouver to Katie's hospital bed.

Note on Text

/ indicates overlapping dialogue.

... indicates somebody not speaking in a significant way.

, in the middle of a sentence indicates a pivot of thought.

– indicates an interrupted thought.

Words in [square brackets] are intended but not spoken.

Words in **bold** are voiced by more than one person. There may be additional text that is voiced by more than one person as well, to be determined in rehearsal.

The choral text is shared out amongst the cast, to be determined in rehearsal.

All of the characters are between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, with one exception.

30 January 2016. Morning.

Okay, so we'll start on the sea floor.

Off the coast of the UK, the south-east coast.

A big dredging machine does its heavy thing, a chunk of the sea floor gets crushed and milled to within a few micrograms of the appropriate size.

Then it's superheated in a big kiln and when it cools down it's superheated again.

Then it gets put on the back of a lorry and driven north and west, and slapped up as part of a garden wall.

Which is maintained by the council for nearly a whole lifetime.

Until it's not maintained any more.

It wiggles loose but people keep sliding it back. The neighbours, it makes them nervous, there's something a little too inviting about a loose brick in a wall, it's like a loose tooth, you just want to rip it free.

One day it winds up in a gutter and if it had stayed there maybe everything would have been different.

But it got kicked back onto the pavement again.

Wendy sees it just as she's getting on the minibus to Dover, everybody else has bricks or poles or,

everybody else has *something*,

and she's the only girl, she's gonna need to protect herself in case it gets nasty.

And you know these fuckers love to get nasty.

So Wendy picks it up almost without thinking, except that the others all laugh when they see her do it. She realises she's gonna tell THEM about it, her proper friends, her friends from the alt-right forums in Germany and Denmark and the States, they all know she's going and they're completely in solidarity with her, they'll be really proud that she's resisting, she's taking the fight to the streets and she's not scared.

(She definitely won't be telling her mum or brother or any of the idiots at college, well she never tells them anything, they wouldn't understand the importance of resisting, and anyway her mum's just happy she's eating again and finally back at college.)

She's got this chunk of England in the random shrapnel of her bag, the carcass of an old tampon applicator, a battered notice of a doctor's appointment, some sorry-you're-leaving cards from whenever that was. A bandana in red, black and white, National Front colours, the historic colours of the Reich, to tie across her face for the demo.

It feels good, the weight.

This is the first time Wendy's been out of the house in daylight in a long time. Not counting college, because an A-level farm for posh fuckups absolutely doesn't count for anything.

When she goes out it's a secret, it's for long night-time runs over the downs, she likes to feel

the cold air in her lungs, she likes the way it hurts, she likes to see the landscape the way it would have been a thousand years ago, not choked with people like it is now, and she really likes to burn off whatever nonsense her mum has made her force down for dinner.

She runs in the dark, beyond the pain, she is a valkyrie, a warrior.

She's glad she gave the minibus driver an address two streets down, her mum would definitely have looked funny at the other passengers, Wendy doesn't actually know them, they're all men ten or twenty years older than her.

They could bench-press her.

They could pick her up with one hand.

None of them talk to her but they look. The whole minibus is looking. She stares down furiously at her bag.

Wendy doesn't want to talk to them, she hates her voice, she'd rather type. She doesn't want them to look at her, she hates feeling their eyes on her, the minibus is pulling away, maybe this was a mistake –

Maybe this was all, a, terrible... [*mistake.*]

She grips the brick in the depths of her bag.

Feels like it's keeping her. Firm on the earth.

Flicking over to a radically different station.

But I didn't start the journey because of the brick. I want to make that very clear.

By the time the brick was in the air I'd been on the move for hours.

The old king has undertaken a journey, it's very dangerous, but he must see his child again, there's no time to lose. He will walk up and down the aisle to prevent blood clots, wear special socks, he will keep his weak and fragile body going until he arrives at his child's side.

He knows nothing about the brick.

He knows nothing about the demo.

All that he knows is that something is telling him to move, something is telling me to move, something is telling me that the stakes have changed and I need to get to my child's side, there's no time to lose.

30 January 2016. Afternoon.

Sound of a stone smashing a window.

MALIK runs in from the next room. Picks up the stone. It's smooth and rounded all over, like it came from the beach. There's a note strapped around it by a rubber band. He pops it into his pocket quickly as he hears BOJANA coming. Turning toward her –

BOJANA. Don't move!

MALIK. Uh –

Okay –

BOJANA. You don't know where the glass has got to, don't move, I'll get the Hoover.

She disappears and MALIK immediately takes the rock out of his pocket to look at the note. He jams his hands back in his pockets as she comes back with the Hoover.

MALIK. You can't –

He waves his hands at the Hoover.

BOJANA. What?

MALIK. You can't um – you can't Hoover that, it'll cut up the bag, it'll – you can't.

BOJANA. Course you can.

MALIK. It'll fuck up, the Hoover'll be – shedding broken glass into the carpets for months, it'll the landlord'll

flip out

you don't want to Hoover broken glass with that thing trust me.

BOJANA. Really? Because –

MALIK. Look, just please can you get a dustpan and brush.

Just to please me.

Please?

BOJANA rolls her eyes but there's a smile flickering near her mouth. She's leaving to get the dustpan and brush.

MALIK. Anyway, you're late for work now, get out of here!

She pops to get the dustpan and brush and MALIK reads the note. He looks a bit sick. He is just a bit slow at stuffing it into his pocket this time and is startled to see BOJANA, looking at him. She hands him a dustpan and brush and keeps a broom for herself.

BOJANA. You know I've been thinking we should put something in the windows. Cut out erm erm

(Does a scissors gesture.) the, snowflakes, the ones made of paper, or something.

MALIK. It's after Christmas, why would we –

BOJANA. So the seagulls don't keep slamming into our windows.

Right?

MALIK *(he is not sure if she knows that it's not seagulls breaking the windows)*. Oh. Oh yeah.

BOJANA *(she knows it isn't seagulls that are breaking the windows)*. Because if it keeps happening, maybe, the windows are unsafe.

MALIK *(he feels like maybe she knows it's not seagulls breaking the windows)*. Maybe.

BOJANA. It's not very nice to the seagulls, I don't like it.

MALIK *(uncomfortable with the direction this conversation has taken)*. Maybe that's not the, issue though...

BOJANA. Can you imagine how crazy if a seagull got trapped I mean, they're crazy enough normally how would you even get a crazy seagull out of the front room?

It'd fly around and get blood everywhere.

The landlord would. Flip out.

Quiet as they sweep. BOJANA switches on the radio. A radio broadcast from 30 January 2016 starts to play.

MALIK. Spooky action at a distance.

BOJANA. D'you reckon?

MALIK. Yeah, kind of.

BOJANA. In what way?

MALIK. Spooky action at a distance is –

we react as if we're close together.

But we're really far apart.

Right?

BOJANA. Uh-huh.

MALIK. And – science doesn't know how we can be reacting to each other. But we still are.

BOJANA. Fucking science, right? Ow!

MALIK. What?

BOJANA. My –

She's cut her finger.

MALIK. Seriously stop with this – (*Cleaning the broken glass.*) it'll fuck you up for your shift, I can handle this alone.

BOJANA. I don't like you handling this alone, it's not fair, it's –

...

MALIK. It is fair.

It is fair.

BOJANA. It's both of our windows getting broken, I don't like you –

MALIK. Don't like me what?

BOJANA. Being so –

whatever it is we can deal with it together.

MALIK. I promise you, I've lived here all my life, I know how to handle it.

BOJANA. Do you?

MALIK. Yes, Bojana, yes I actually do know how to handle it, it'd just be more trouble if you got involved, I don't –

BOJANA. It's the third time this month, it's fucking January, it's too cold for this shit.

MALIK. We'll talk about it after your shift, just –

BOJANA. Why don't we just not have windows? Why don't we just break them all ourselves?

About to smash the window. She fakes him out.

MALIK. Are you joking?

BOJANA. They'd have to stop if we didn't have any more windows to break.

MALIK. Let's clean up your finger and get you out of here.

BOJANA. We need to, resist it, we need to at least try and stop it I'm tired of this, Malik –

MALIK. You're not making this easier, you know.

BOJANA. I'm not making this easier? I'm not –

Do you have anything in your pocket?

Anything,

in your pocket,

you could use, maybe, to break a window?

A brief silence in which we hear the radio drone on about hospitalisations after a protest in Dover.

MALIK *turns on the hoover.*

BOJANA *leaves.*

30 January 2016. Early Afternoon.

(Katie, in his memory). It's always interesting, the people who decide they're the master race, isn't it?

Elliott should not have let Katie be so far in front, why the fuck would he do that.

(Elliott, in his memory). What d'you mean?

(Katie, in his memory). I mean fucking look at them.

Look at that guy.

(Elliott, in his memory). What guy?

(Katie, in his memory). The, erm.

The one with the eyes.

(Elliott, in his memory)....

Oh yes I see, fair point I guess, yes.

She should have been wearing a mask, Elliott knew that, he KNEW that but he didn't want to condescend to her so she didn't – come on, come on, he doesn't know it was because she wasn't wearing a mask, this is not, useful, this is not a useful feeling right now.

There's an offensive gleam to the linoleum on the floor, why are hospitals so fucking ugly and why do they smell like that.

This is another problem, Elliott doesn't know who to ring. There is a number marked 'Dad' in her phone but that could be some kind of weird joke, one of her friends from Vancouver saved as something else as a –

Fuck it. [*Just do it.*]

No but wait, would it be really weird, if Katie wakes up and her dad is here, would that actually be a good thing or would it – plus it's so early, it's still so early in Vancouver, should he, is this –

Right then the nurse calls him, Katie is still unconscious, there is a dark flower blossoming across her brain.

The nurse shows him on the scan.

Growing fast.

Any luck with her father, or –

Elliott feels like he's gonna shit himself, he feels like he's gonna rip his own scalp off, YES, do the surgery please don't wait, purple hair and unmasked face, it was practically target practice right at the front.

He asks the nurse for a prognosis and she says of course he'll have to wait for a consultant.

He asks if he can **please see her**.

She says he can but only after he speaks to the police.

YES, doing something actually fucking useful to Katie, not being a fucking limp dick helicoptering around –

And maybe it's because of that thought, in general he absolutely hates cops, but when the policeman swims into view, about Elliott's age, such pink cheeks like a kid who's been running around in the cold, he offers Elliott tea so gently that Elliott can't help but like him right away.

(*Katie, in his memory*) – Not many cops for such a big demo.

Elliott asks why there weren't more police, when a load of literal Nazis are going to descend on your town, is it really out of the question to assume they might get violent.

The officer says he's sorry, he's really so sorry, but they aren't here to talk about that.

*

A Nick Hern Book

Spooky Action at a Distance first published in Great Britain in 2019 as a digital exclusive by Nick Hern Books Limited, The Glasshouse, 49a Goldhawk Road, London W12 8QP

Spooky Action at a Distance copyright © 2019 Eve Leigh

Eve Leigh has asserted her right to be identified as the author of this work

Cover image: shutterstock.com/Varavin88

Designed and typeset by Nick Hern Books, London

ISBN 978 1 78850 108 8 (ebook edition)

CAUTION All rights whatsoever in this play are strictly reserved. Requests to reproduce the text in whole or in part should be addressed to the publisher.

Amateur Performing Rights Applications for performance, including readings and excerpts, by amateurs in the English language throughout the world should be addressed to the Performing Rights Manager, Nick Hern Books, The Glasshouse, 49a Goldhawk Road, London W12 8QP, *tel* +44 (0)20 8749 4953, *email* rights@nickhernbooks.co.uk, except as follows:

Australia: Dominic Drama, 8 Cross Street, Brookvale 2100, *tel* (2) 9938 8686, *fax* (2) 9938 8695, *email* drama@dominie.com.au

New Zealand: Play Bureau, PO Box 9013, St Clair, Dunedin 9047, *tel* (3) 455 9959, *email* info@playbureau.com

United States and Canada: 42M&P Ltd, see details below

Professional Performing Rights Applications for performance by professionals in any medium and in any language throughout the world should be addressed to 42 M&P Ltd, Palladium House, 7th Floor, 1–4 Argyll Street, London W1F 7TA, *tel* +44 (0)20 7292 0554, www.42mp.com

No performance of any kind may be given unless a licence has been obtained. Applications should be made before rehearsals begin. Publication of this play does not necessarily indicate its availability for performance.

Big New Plays for Great Big Casts

ENJOYED THIS EXTRACT?

Here's what to do next...

1. READ THE FULL PLAY

Request your free copy of the full script by clicking the 'REQUEST SCRIPT' button on the Multiplay Drama play page and filling out the pop-up form. Alternatively you can email Nick Hern Books at rights@nickhernbooks.co.uk or call 020 8749 4953.

OR buy the ebook via www.nickhernbooks.co.uk and all major ebook retailers.

2. APPLY FOR YOUR PERFORMANCE LICENCE

If you'd like to perform this play, apply for the rights by emailing Nick Hern Books at rights@nickhernbooks.co.uk or phoning 020 8749 4953.

Rights are available for the discounted rate of **£60 per performance** (plus VAT where applicable).

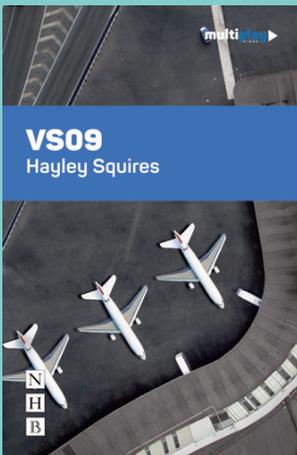
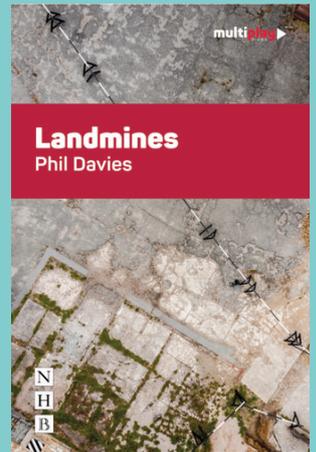
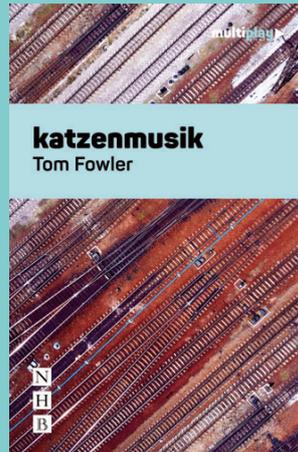
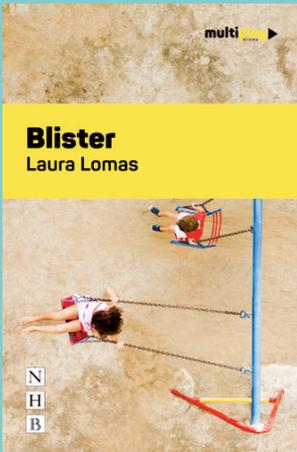
3. GET YOUR SCRIPTS

Once you've arranged your licence, contact us to purchase your cast and crew set of scripts. These are provided as a printable PDF, priced depending on how many copies you need. Then you're all set!

WANT TO READ ANOTHER EXTRACT?

Visit www.multiplaydrama.co.uk to see the full selection and find the perfect play for you.

Big New Plays for Great Big Casts



An exciting new series of large-cast plays, specifically written to be performed by and appeal to older teenagers and young adults.

'A brilliant initiative' Sarah Frankcom, Artistic Director, Royal Exchange Theatre and Director Designate, LAMDA

'Unique and important' Vicky Featherstone, Artistic Director, Royal Court Theatre

