

Tied to the Vicarage

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. ST MAXIM'S CHURCH - DAY

A beautiful church in remote location. A handful of elderly parishioners stand outside. They look up the road.

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - DAY

Reverend JAMES CLARKE, 30 - looks too young and fresh to be a minister - frantically pedals his bicycle. His bible gripped against the handlebar.

EXT. ST MAXIM'S CHURCH - DAY

Closer, parishioners mutter to one another.

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - DAY

James stands up on the pedals as he climb an incline. Beads of sweat run down his face.

EXT. ST MAXIM'S CHURCH - DAY

James walks through the parishioners and takes a key from his pocket. He places it in the lock but it won't open.

NED ROLPH, 60 - a schoolboy at heart - arrives behind him.

NED

Think it needs grease.

JAMES

Ooh, I don't know...

James leans against the door

JAMES

(strained)

A little brute force ought to...

The lock clicks open. James is caught off guard. It swings wide and James - hands flailing - falls into:

INT. CHURCH ENTRANCE AREA - DAY

James - unable to regain balance - collides with an EAGLE LECTERN and bounces against a table then onto the floor.

He looks back at the parishioners but their gaze is elsewhere. He tracks across then sees the lectern toppling towards him.

(CONTINUED)

JAMES

Oh for...

James rolls away just as the lectern crashes down onto the floor. The parishioners rush over to help. Ned leans down.

NED

Told you.

LATER

James - dressed in cassock and stole - stands by the door. he shakes hand with people as they leave.

DAPHNE (frail, 80) leads the line. She holds JETHRO's arm.

JAMES

Lovely to see you Daphne.

DAPHNE

Eh?

JAMES

Thanks for coming.

DAPHNE

What? Haven't run since I was thirty!

Ned is next in line. He nods towards the eagle lectern.

NED

Wouldn't think you could break one of those.

The pair turn and look at the dented eagle lectern.

NED

Shall I record it in the book?

JAMES

Yes. Must keep it legal.

As Ned walks off towards Vestry.

JAMES

Oh Ned. Any news on our missing collection plate?

NED

Er...no.

Ned continues but now he looks guilty. Prim CYNTHIA JENKINS (60s) enters church. She pushes into the queue.

(CONTINUED)

CYNTHIA
I've seen her!

JAMES
Who?

CYNTHIA
The woman! She's there now!
Outside the vicarage.

JAMES
Please Cynthia. As I said, it's
probably my sister-in-law:

CYNTHIA
No. This one's different. Creepy
eyes. If we go now, we'll catch
her.

JAMES
What? No. I can't. I've got to
lock up.

Ned returns.

NED
I can do that for you.

JAMES
(reluctant)
Er...what...thanks Ned but I
really...

The parishioners nod their heads in unison.

JAMES
(sighs)
Very well!

EXT. ST MAXIM'S VICARAGE - DAY

Large vicarage in rural estate with sports car outside.

DOORSTEP

James and Cynthia talk with JULIA - confident 30 year
old who stands in the doorway.

JAMES
Sorry Julia.

JULIA
No problem.

CYNTHIA
(protests)
I tell you I saw her. Here! On
the doorstep. Cruel eyes. Ugly
grin.

JULIA
I didn't see anyone.

CYNTHIA
(anxious)
Maybe she's got inside?

Cynthia attempts to look inside but Julia obstructs entry.

JULIA
There's no one here.

CYNTHIA
But she might be dangerous?

JULIA
I'll be fine.

JAMES
Yes, Julia's quite capable of
looking after herself.

James leads Cynthia away by an arm.

CYNTHIA
But...

JULIA
Sorry I couldn't be more help.

As James and Cynthia walk away...

JULIA (O.C.)
James!

Julia walks up to James and hands him a folded cheque.

JULIA
A cheque. For Karen.

JAMES
Thanks.

EXT. TOWNHOUSE - DAY

Semi-detached house with bicycle parked against wall.

INT. TOWNHOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY

Attractive KAREN CLARK 30 sits and cradles baby CHARLIE .
James ends phonecall.

KAREN
Who was that?

JAMES
Bishop. Wants to meet tomorrow.

KAREN
But we're going to Denly.

JAMES
Have to wait.

KAREN
Why didn't you say you had a
funeral?

JAMES
Because it's not true.

KAREN
Yes. But he doesn't know -

JAMES
Darling. You know how I feel
about lying.

KAREN
Didn't complain when I told
Cynthia you were out last week.

JAMES
That's different. It was your
decision.

KAREN
What! But you're the one who -

JAMES
I didn't ask you to lie for me.

KAREN
Really James. One of there days -

DOORBELL RINGS (O..S.)

JAMES
I'll get it!

Karen bites lip but James does not see as he exits out to:

I/E. FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

James opens the door. Ned stands with keys in hand.

NED
I brought the keys.

JAMES
(taking keys)
Thanks. Be lost without them.

Ned turns to go.

JAMES
Oh Ned. Cynthia says you saw a
UFO?

NED
(smiles, excited)
At Binkly Point. Was blue and
orange -

JAMES
Probably an aircraft. That's the
most likely explanation.

NED
(fuming)
Anyway, must go.

INT. TOWNHOUSE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Karen reads a book in bed. James - in pyjamas - folds his
trousers. The cheque falls out and he hands it to her.

JAMES
From Julia.

Karen speaks while reading.

KAREN
I'll bank it tomorrow.

As James gets into bed.

JAMES
Doing well. Lovely sports car.
What does she do again?

KAREN
Some kind of executive coach?

JAMES
Business must be good.

Karen looks up from her book.

(CONTINUED)

KAREN

What are you saying - that we should increase the rent?

James laughs but that's exactly what he was thinking.

JAMES

Mustn't be greedy. So long as the girl's school fees are covered.

James rolls over, his back towards Karen. She places her book down and snuggles into him from behind.

KAREN

Tired?

JAMES

Mmm.

KAREN

(seductive)

We can stay up if you like?

JAMES

(yawns)

Busy day tomorrow. Need to be at my best for the Bishop. Night.

James turns off bedside light. Karen's face sours. She rolls over and turns off her light.

INT. BISHOP'S HOUSE - DAY

Large office with wall to wall bookshelves. James sits in armchair next to sofa. A local newspaper rests on table.

The headlines read: 'POLICE SEARCH FOR VICE HOUSE' and 'LOCAL MAN SPOTS UFO.'

As James studies the grainy photo of the UFO, the door opens. BISHOP PATRICK enters. He hands a cup tea to James.

BISHOP

Sorry to keep you. Just been on the phone accepting Edward's resignation.

JAMES

He's moving on?

BISHOP

Disciplinary matter I'm afraid.

JAMES

What - Edward?

James takes a sup of tea.

(CONTINUED)

BISHOP
Caught him renting out his
vicarage to a couple from church.

James sprays tea out and starts to choke.

BISHOP
You okay James?

James signals with hand.

BISHOP
Wouldn't have known anything
about it, only they phoned to
complain when he put up the rent.

James continues to cough.

BISHOP
Apparently, he was using it to
pay off his mortgage. Said he
didn't know clergy couldn't do
that sort of thing.

JAMES
(amazed)
They can't?

BISHOP
Heavens, no! Get the sack. That
said, it's amazing how many do.

JAMES
(Laughs nervously)
Yes.

BISHOP
Not that you've anything to worry
about. Just concentrate on
preparing for interview.

JAMES
I'll try.

BISHOP
You're a very strong candidate.

Bishop stands up and they shake hands.

BISHOP
Now, if you'll excuse me. There's
a fountain at the town hall that
need to be consecrated.

James manages a halfhearted smile.

INT. TOWNHOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY

James and Karen paces an anxious circle around the room.

KAREN

I want to stay here. Aunt Edie's place costs nothing. And it's close to the shops. Why move?

JAMES

Because Julia's not supposed to be in our vicarage if we're not there...

KAREN

What?!!

JAMES

Ecclesiastical law. Checked with Duncan. Fact we're charging her rent makes it even worse.

KAREN

Poor Julia!

JAMES

Never mind her! What about me? I could lose my job! Miss out on becoming archdeacon!

KAREN

Don't fret James. We'll talk to the Bishop. I'm sure he'll understand.

JAMES

He won't. He's just sacked Edward for renting out his.

KAREN

Oh my!

JAMES

There's nothing for it. I'll phone Julia. Tell her she has to be out as soon as possible.

KAREN

But what about school fees?

JAMES

We'll cross that bridge when we come to it. Right now, we need to get back in that vicarage.