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Characters (3 Female, 4 Male, 1 either)

Mary Slocombe..... *A friend and domestic helper of Katie*

Katie Danvers

Adele Pincombe.....*A cousin to Katie, and Peter, sister to Simon*

Peter Danvers.....*A cousin to Katie, Adele, and Simon*

Simon Pincombe.....*A cousin to Katie, and Peter, brother to Adele*

Tarquin.....*Partner to Simon*

Doctor Randle

David Potter.....*A funeral director*

Character's description and costume guidelines

Katie Danvers – Playing age to suit your actress from early fifties to late sixties. She's flamboyant and eccentric in character with a quite cold abrupt attitude. She wears light free flowing chiffon and/or loose hippie style clothing, with bangles and beads. A shawl/scarf, brimmed hat and gloves to accommodate script will also help to achieve the illusion in Act II scene two.

Mary Slocombe – Played early fifties to late sixties. Has a broad local accent with a tendency to being nosy. She wears casual everyday clothing.

Adele Pincombe – Played younger than Katie. Quite an ordinary no-frills type of person and wearing simple quite plain clothing.

Peter Danvers – Retired from the army. He wears smart casual clothing.

Simon Pincombe – Played younger or older than Adele. Wears a fashionable designer type of casual clothing. For ACT II, Scene three He wears either pyjamas or a hospital gown, a bandaged hand (*the one used to switch off the light*) a sticking plaster on the forehead and a walking stick.

Tarquin – Played similar age to Simon. A very effeminate and a raving Queen type of person, waving his arms to express himself. He walks daintily and primly. However, there are areas when he becomes extremely masculine and butch. He wears over the top bright, flamboyant clothing.

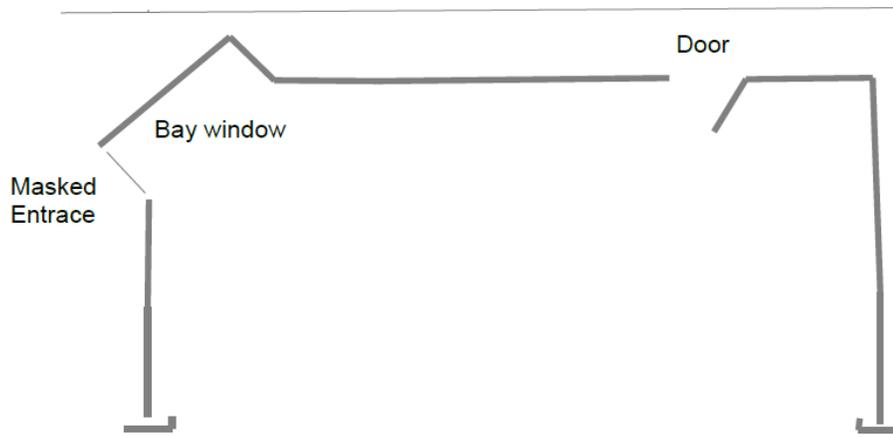
Doctor Randle – Can be male or female. A professional run of the mill country Doctor.

David Potter – Can be played any age that fits believably with the other cast and situation. A funeral director, who is well spoken. He has a kind gentle manner with Katie, and when alone with Tarquin, he shows a warmth towards him. He wears clothing to reflect his profession.

A full length Play in two acts

Running time excluding interval : - 120 minutes

Room design



Synopsis of scenes

- ACT I Scene 1 Late morning
- ACT I Scene 2..... 2.30 p.m. the same day
- ACT I Scene 3..... One hour later
- ACT II Scene 1..... 10.00 a.m. the next morning
- ACT II Scene 2 That evening
- ACT II Scene 3..... Day three, early afternoon

MURDER BECOMES EASY

ACT I

Scene one

Late Morning

It's late morning in the sitting room of Sweetbriar House. This is a well-furnished and quite theatrical looking room to suit the stage size. A sofa and two arm chairs are present with a coffee table placed in front of the sofa. There are two large wall pictures, one hung stage right and the other stage left. The use of copies or reproductions are needed to fit-in with the dialogue. The drinks table with bottles and glasses upon it is set against the stage left wall. The waste paper basket/shredder, telephone, phone book, radio and standard lamp can be set to your own requirements. There is a central light, chandelier and long curtains hanging at the window. Off stage masking and decor with additional room furnishings to suit the space and stage where needed

The Curtain rises to a bright well lit room with Mary singing or whistling whilst dusting the furniture. The telephone rings

Mary *(shouts)* Katie, the phone's ringing! *(Continues briefly with the dusting before stopping; shouts again)* It's the phone! *(Listens with no reply. She goes over and opens the door calling off)* The phone's ringing! *(No response, she looks at the phone turns and picks up the telephone receiver)* Hello . . . It is the house of Katie Danvers . . . *(Lowering her tone; intrigued)* Just wait a moment please. *(Placing down the receiver and goes to the door checking no one's around. Closing the door quietly she picks up the telephone receiver: nosily)* I'm Mary Slocombe, Miss Danvers home help and friend. Who's calling? . . . *(Surprised)* Potters' Funerals! *(Reassuring)* How can I help? Miss Danvers shares everything with me and I am able to relay your information to her . . . *(Taken aback)* Well really! *(Slams down the receiver)* I may be inquisitive, but never nosy! *(Resumes dusting vigorously)*

[A door is heard closing hard off stage]

Katie *(calling)* Mary!

Mary *(loudly)* Sitting room.

[Katie enters the room quite flamboyantly and closing the door before she plops her handbag down]

Katie I've just been and posted my urgent correspondence.

- Mary** (*stops cleaning for a moment*) You've had a phone call.
- Katie** (*sitting upon the sofa arm*) Who was it?
- Mary** Potters' Funerals.
- Katie** To do with my funeral arrangements no doubt.
- Mary** (*sitting on a chair arm a little puzzled*) Funeral arrangements?
- Katie** (*rearranging her shawl or scarf*) I'm not getting any younger and I wanted to make sure my funeral arrangements were in order. (**Looking at Mary; sternly**) Have you left instructions for when you kick the bucket?
- Mary** (*taken aback*) No I haven't!
- Katie** (*stands*) You ought to. (*Goes over to the telephone and picks up the receiver, but does not dial a number*) You could be here today and gone tomorrow.
- Mary** (*flatly*) Potter's not fattening his profit margin with my funeral for several years to come. (**Stands**) I hope!
- Katie** (*placing down the receiver having changed her mind*) He won't deal with your funeral anyway.
- Mary** (*resumes cleaning*) Why not?
- Katie** (*returns to the stage left chair and sits*) This has to be kept a secret.
- Mary** (*keenly*) Keep what a secret?
- Katie** David Potter has sold his funeral business and wishes to keep it quiet for the moment.
- Mary** (*abruptly*) Why?
- Katie** Goodwill of the business. I've just merely made sure my funeral arrangements are held in good stead under the new ownership.
- Mary** (*a little offish*) Normal people use a Solicitor or have a prepaid funeral plan.
- Katie** I'm not paying for my funeral at today's prices. And I'm not paying Spencers Solicitors to alter my Will every time I change my mind.
- Mary** Which is more often than not!
- Katie** The more my funeral costs - the less those family vultures shall

inherit! **(Quite smugly)** David Potter has helped me in getting my funeral wishes written down. *(Upbeat)* All for free too!

Mary **(coldly)** He can afford for it to be free. It may be a dying trade, but he's done well out of it! **(With some disapproval)** That yacht he bought a year or so back cost more than most people's houses!

Katie Not too keen on David Potter; are you? **(Smugly)** I find him quite charming and he's been most helpful to me of late.

Mary He gives me the creeps. Gazing and mentally noting everyone's measurements. **(Shudders)** How you can accompany him for trips around the bay beats me?

Katie He's a sheer pleasure to be with and he has his uses.

Mary And that lustful look, as if he's mentally undressing you. **(Shudders and cringes)**

Katie **(excited)** I know, delicious isn't it?

Mary **(Stops dusting and glares at Katie; shocked)** Katie! **(With distaste and resumes to dust)** He makes my skin crawl. **(Shivers)**

Katie David Potter has an important rôle for my future existence and he ignites my inner emotions when I think of it.

Mary **(stops dusting; shocked)** Katie Danvers! You're quite disgusting. And your recent behaviour is more than questionable too! **(Resumes to dust)**

Katie **(with some puzzlement)** My recent behaviour?

Mary **(sternly)** Those letters and phone calls from Estate Agents and Banks. **(A little softer)** You've not shared one word with me about them, or left anything lying around so I could cast my eye over?

Katie Because none of it concerns you. And my behaviour is quite normal.

Mary Then why have you invited what remains of your family here today? You've not had any contact with them for years.

Katie **(abrupt)** You don't know that?

Mary You could pass in the street and not recognize each other.

Katie **(softer)** That is unfortunately true.

- Mary** And none of them attended your brother Henry's funeral five years ago!
- Katie** (*sharply*) That's because I didn't tell them he had died as they had nothing to inherit.
- Mary** Whereas you were around there like a shot, removing valuables as the poor old sod was being taken out by stretcher. It took you less than an hour to rifle through that house removing anything of value. Not to mention all his money you purloined from the biscuit tin in the larder.
- Katie** I had to pay for his funeral with something!
- Mary** With thousands to spare and all tucked up in a nice little bank account!
- Katie** I've just taken good care of his money whereas others would only abuse it. (*Standing*) Now, you had better get some refreshments ready as they'll want feeding. (*Going to the telephone*) And I need to phone David Potter.
- Mary** (*prying*) I'm still at a loss as to why you've summoned this family of yours here today? (*Gathering her cleaning items ready to exit*)
- Katie** To inform them of what they'll get from my estate when I croak.
- Mary** (*sourly*) You've not seen any of them for years. Why let them inherit anything?
- Katie** Want a bigger slice for yourself?
- Mary** You know full well I'm not a gold digger.
- Katie** But I am, and out to get all I can from my nearest and dearest.
- Mary** (*coldly*) You frighten me at times. (*Prying*) When did all this inviting them here today start?
- Katie** Last Christmas. For the first time in many years I sent Christmas cards to my remaining cousins. I resented the cost of the card and stamp, but as they are family I couldn't really begrudge spending a little on them.
- Mary** (*alert*) A Christmas card from you! That must have shocked them.
- Katie** I also enclosed a short well written letter. And hoped they would agree to my suggestion.

- Mary** (*quickly*) What suggestion was that?
- Katie** As we cousins are the last of the Danvers blood line. I would be willing to leave them each a legacy, if they all left me a legacy. After some discussion by telephone it was all agreed. We each leave at least half of our estates for division between any surviving family members.
- Mary** Can't see why.
- Katie** (*quickly*) Assuming the capital is kept and not spent, the last family member living gets a whopping good lump sum.
- Mary** I still don't see the advantage?
- Katie** (*quickly*) Because I intend to outlive the bloody lot of them and have it all.
- Mary** You may not be the last to die!
- Katie** That my dear, Mary, is a risk I have to take.
- Mary** (*puzzled*) Now you've all agreed to leave at least half of your estates to each other. Surely there's no need to invite them here today?
- Katie** (*flippant*) A moment of weakness. (*With hardness*) Now in the cold light of day, I realise it was a foolish, reckless decision. I should have had a large glass of Lilac Wine and waited for the impulse to disappear.
- Mary** (*aghast*) Disappear! That homemade wine blows your flipping head off!
- Katie** Which is why I am the only one who drinks it!
- Mary** And another thing. Why have you been stripping this house and selling any items of value, then replacing them with cheap replicas?
- Katie** (*quickly and abrupt*) None of your damn business. Stop poking your nose into my affairs.
- Mary** (*a little subdued*) The only way I find out what's happening is by poking my nose in.
- Katie** Knowledge is a power, too much can be dangerous. Just watch your step, Mary.

Mary Are you warning me off?

Katie Some areas of my life I wish to remain private. *(With emphasis)*
Do - you - understand?

Mary *(resigned)* I suppose so. *(More stern)* There's still something
peculiar afoot. And I shan't rest until I get to the bottom of it.
(Exiting with cleaning items and closing the door)

*(Mary waits off stage, listening with her ear and shoulder tightly against
the door holding a duster as if rubbing off a mark at shoulder height.
Katie picks up the telephone receiver. After a slight pause, she then
replaces it back onto the phone unit. Quietly Katie goes to the door and
opens it wide quickly. As the door opens, Mary stumbles on stage
sideways with the duster poised as if cleaning the door)*

Mary *(sheepishly worried)* I noticed a stubborn mark on the door.

Katie *(smirking)* Such marks are so tiresome to remove are they not?
(Looking at the hall side of the door) Mary, you are so clever;
the dirty mark has been completely eradicated.

Mary *(sheepishly exits)* I shall go to the kitchen and prepare things.

Katie *(standing halfway in the doorway watching Mary
disappearing)* You do that, after all it's what I pay you for.
*(Turns back into the room and closes the door. She then
picks up the telephone receiver and dials a number)* Hello
David . . . *(Surprised)* Goodness me! I knew it was worth a
reasonable sum of money but not as much as that! Not that I'm
complaining, the more money in the pot the more we can enjoy
ourselves. Thanks for dealing with it, you're so good at getting
top dollar for my worldly goods . . . *(With a saucy laugh glances
at the time)* As much as I want to talk, I must go, I need to
telephone Jessops the estate agents . . . Yes, all's completed
with them. I just want to inform them about a little token of my
appreciation, which I have just posted . . . I will, bye. *(Replaces
the receiver)*

*(Katie goes to her hand bag, opens it and removes an envelope
containing a letter from Jessops estate agents. Taking the letter out of
the envelope, she unfolds it and goes to the door. Opening the door and
looking down the hallway to make sure all is clear. Closing the door, she
then lifts the telephone receiver and dials the number written on top of
the letter)*

Katie Is that Helen? . . . It's Miss Danvers... I'm extremely pleased with
the way you have dealt with my affairs. And as a token of my
appreciation, I have paid for you all to have a meal with drinks
included at The Mallard restaurant in the High Street. Just

produce the voucher which I have just posted to you to the management. Its value is more than enough for you all to have a good night and any unused credit Domino's can donate to a charity. . . I do like to show my gratitude when I'm satisfied with good service. . . Yes, all the relevant documentation with those concerned has been completed to my specification. Please convey my gratitude to your other colleagues and my very best wishes to you my dear, bye. **(Replacing the receiver)**

(Katie tears the letter into shreds and throws it into the waste paper bin or destroys it through a paper shredder. She looks at her wrist watch)

Katie **(goes to the door, opens it and calls to Mary whilst remaining in the door way)** Mary! **(Pauses, then calls out louder)** Mary!!

Mary **(answering off stage; quite stern)** Yes?

Katie **(making herself heard from the doorway)** Its twelve forty five now, the family will be arriving at two thirty. What am I having for lunch?

Mary **(calling back)** Ham salad!

(Katie turns back into the room as Mary comes to the doorway)

Katie **(not amused)** Salad again! **(Abrupt)** This will be the fourth day in a row!

Mary **(in the doorway; slightly annoyed)** It's light and nutritious. Slugs and snails flourish on it!

Katie **(not impressed; with sarcasm)** Do I look like a slug or a snail?

Mary What about eggs then?

Katie **(looking at her wrist watch: not enamoured)** Not too keen and time's running out. I'll stick with the salad. **(Picking up her handbag)** If we dilly dally about much longer, those carcass picking Vultures will be banging at the door.

Mary Do you have to be so crass in describing your relatives?

(Katie begins to make her exit indicating Mary to walk ahead of her)

Katie **(flippant)** Not one of them would think twice at scalping me if they thought they'd get money for it. I know, cause I'd do the bloody same to any one of them too!

Black-out

ACT I
Scene two

Two thirty the same day

The scene opens with Katie sitting on the stage left chair; her hand bag is on the floor at her left side. Mary is stood behind the sofa

- Mary** This estranged family of yours - There's one you've never met!
- Katie** I have met Adele. It was at her Christening.
- Mary** You can't count that. She was only about four months old and you were only nine or ten.
- Katie** Such a horrid brat, screaming at the top of her ruddy voice. Her mother should have stuffed something in her gob to shut her up! Or shoved her outside a long way from earshot.
- Mary** You have a very cold heart?
- Katie** No point getting sentimental over objects or people, especially estranged cousins. It saves any grieving once they've gone.
- Mary** I'm glad I'm your friend and not your enemy.
- Katie** Friend or foe, I don't shed tears on anyone's demise.
- Mary** That, I can believe.
- Katie** *(instructively)* Now, I want you to show them in here when they arrive. Announce each as they enter. That way I will know who they are.
- Mary** Will they know who you are?

Katie Of course they'll know who I am; I invited them! *(Glares at Mary)* There's still time to spruce yourself up a bit. Try and look more sophisticated and of sounder quality. There are some old beads and things in a box on the dressing table in the front spare bedroom, bung some of them on. A nice white apron would also

look good.

Mary (*surprisingly puzzled*) What on earth for?

Katie It will give the impression that I'm worth more than I am. And that I pay for quality home help and not just some odd job woman from the village.

Mary (*taken aback; shocked*) Well really! I've never been called an odd job woman before!

Katie (*pleased*) Well, now you have.

Mary (*sternly*) And your relations may not be so greedy as what you are? (*Begin to exit*)

Katie Hah! Vultures the lot of them. And the moment I croak, they will be around here quicker than a blue bottle with the trots.

Mary You don't know that?

Katie But I do, and you're not so far behind either.

Mary (*abrupt*) Don't label me like yourself, Katie Danvers! (*Exits*)

The telephone rings and Katie goes and answers it

Katie Hello... Mr. Spencer - yes I'm fine and yourself? . . . How can I be of assistance? . . . Correct. Spencer and Co are in possession of my up-to- date last Will and Testament and to be my executors. Your junior partner has been most helpful with all matters . . . You're a little concerned! Why may I ask? . . . (*Mocking sincerely*) I was as shocked as you were, Mr. Spencer, with the lack of funds when my brother died. As you may remember, he had no funds or property. And I took it upon myself to deal with the payment of his funeral and disposal of his worthless possessions. Unfortunately I was unable to settle your account, but I'm sure as a Solicitor you could suffer the loss. . . (*Harshly*) Cut to the chase, Mr. Spencer, what's your problem? . . . (*Laughs lightly; humoured*) That I might be in the same financial position as my brother. (*Sternly*) I can assure you; I have plenty of money and I am not a tenant of this house! Now, I'm rather busy and expecting guests at any moment. Good bye. (*Replaces the telephone receiver and returns to her chair*)

muttering) Sour faced old walnut, more interested in his profit margin than his client's welfare.

Mary enters the room

Mary (*parades*) Will this do?

Katie Just perfect.

The doorbell rings

Mary Good, 'cause here's one of them now.

Katie (*sitting back in the chair becoming comfortable*) Oh, Mary, try to be a bit regal when announcing the rabble please?

Mary (*with a deep curtsy; offish and snootily*) Yes, madam.

Mary exits and answers the door. Voices are faintly heard off stage. Mary enters and stands aside the door to allow Adele to enter. Mary does the same routine when introducing all the other guests

Mary (*announcing with a little grandeur*) Miss Adele Pincombe, madam.

Adele (*with stretched-out arms for an embrace*) Cousin, Katie. For the first time in our lives we meet at last. I'm at a loss as to why we have never met before?

Katie quite coldly remains nestled into the chair, motionless and ignores the welcome embrace. Adele lowers her arms with disappointment

Katie (*indicating the stage right chair; coldly*) I told your mother to sling her hook after hoping to be a beneficiary of my parent's estate and she wasn't. Not my fault she took it personally, so we never spoke to each other again.

Adele is taken aback with the coldness of Katie and sits in the SR chair. The doorbell rings

Mary (*deeply curtsies*) I shall enquire to whom is ringing your bell, madam. (*Exit closing the door*)

Katie (*casually*) We have met before. When you were a chubby baby wrapped in a rather smelly over wet nappy at your Christening screaming the ruddy place down. I may have been only about ten at the time, but it left a lasting impression on my eardrums and nostrils.

Adele (*taken aback*) I'm very sorry I'm sure.

Katie (*enquiring*) Didn't your brother come with you?

Adele (*with a slight smirk*) Simon will be arriving with his partner.

Katie (*taken aback*) Partner! This little tête-a-tête is not for partners. (*More mellow*) Still, if he's bringing her and she doesn't interfere, I suppose she's welcome.

Adele Hasn't Simon said...

The door opens with Mary cutting the dialogue of Adele

Mary (*announcing with larger grandeur*) A Mr. Peter Danvers, madam.

Peter enters, holds out his hand to shake the hand of Katie

Peter Long time no see, Katie.

Katie coldly ignores his welcome and with a slight flick of the hand dismissing his out stretched one

Peter And as frosty as ever I see. (*To Adele*) Hello, Adele.

Peter crosses and leans over Adele giving her a hug, whilst Katie looks on sneering with distaste

Adele Hello, Peter. Remind me to give you that trifle dish before we leave. It's in my car.

Peter eases back and sits on the sofa SR. Katie turns up her nose on Adele's next line

Adele (*to Katie; happily*) Peter visits occasionally and he always brings me one of his wonderful trifles.

Katie (*not enamored*) Awful things trifles. Just stale leftovers covered up with custard and cream.

Adele They're delicious. And Peter certainly knows how to make them.

Katie (*to Peter; coldly*) I've not had a wedding invite and presume you're still a bachelor?

Peter I was married to the army for many years. I don't believe I would make a good husband.

The doorbell rings

Mary (*deeply curtsies*) Excuse me, madam. (*Exits closing the door*)

Adele Is that your domestic help?

Katie (*smugly*) Mary's a sort of all-rounder you might say. Not professional, but very good for her level of wages.

Peter A cheap skivvy then.

Katie (*recoiling, pursing her lips with a thundering black look*)

How dare you. I pay Mary above the standard rate.

Peter (to Adele) That'll be just above the national minimum wage.

Mary enters.

Mary (*desperately trying to control her laughter*) A Mr Simon Pincombe, and err - company, madam. (*Sniggering with her hand to her mouth*)

Simon enters and followed close behind by a very effeminate and camp Tarquin. Katie can't believe her eyes and all agog at what she is seeing

Simon It's the first time I've been here and what a wonderfully theatrical house it is. (*To Tarquin*) What do you say, Tarquin?

Tarquin (*waving his arms full of gesture*) It's just like a set for a theatrical stage play. (*Taking a hand of Katie kisses it making a loud "moi" sound*) Well hello, Katie. I can call you, Katie, can't I? Of course I can; we are all family.

Katie (*not amused*) Did I hear you say, "we are all family?"

Simon Tarquin and I are a same sex couple.

Tarquin (*elated, to Katie*) Wonderful isn't it darling? And coming here today I've finally met all of Simon's family. (*Crosses to Adele*) Hello darling. (*Embraces Adele whilst she is still sat. he kisses her on both cheeks making over the top "moi" sounds. He then turns to Peter*) Hello, Peter you desirable little tit bit. (*He kisses Peter the same as Adele*)

Katie (*in disgust to Simon*) Are you telling me you're together?

Simon Like two peas in a pod and we're married too. (*Sits on the sofa*)

Tarquin (*throwing his arms around*) Isn't it wonderful?

Katie I'm afraid I don't share your sentiment. (*To Tarquin*) I suggest you sit down turquoise, (*indicating the sofa*) before you take off!

Tarquin It's Tarquin darling, but I shan't take offence. I begs sitting in the middle. (*Sits, crossing legs very effeminately, placing both hands one on top the other on his knee*)

Simon I must have been seventeen the last time we met, Katie. Sorry if my sexual orientation has been a bit of a shock. My fault, I should have told you before coming here today.

Katie (*with some disapproval*) Quite unnerving to know one of my

relatives is a homosapien.

Everyone looks a little blank at Katie

Peter The word is homosexual, Katie.

Katie Never mind what the word is. It's just a mercy Simon isn't a raving queen like turpentine.

Tarquin Isn't she adorable.

Katie (*aside with distaste*) We've never had this sort of thing in the family.

Tarquin (*sitting back, and making himself comfortable. He quickly looks at Simon and Peter*) This is super-duper, a rose between two thorns.

Katie (*not amused*) Personally, I'd call it a tongue sandwich.

Tarquin Very witty. I like a fast humorous mind. I can see we shall get on famously. (*Leaning towards Katie slightly*) We must compare our diaries and make a date to hit the shops. (*Elated*) It will be such a hoot!

Simon (*to Tarquin; aside*) Quiet down a bit. There's not enough room in here for your personality.

Tarquin (*taps Simon; crestfallen*) Party pooper. (*To Katie*) It was quite uncanny whilst travelling here. I remember coming somewhere nearby to visit an old aunt of my mothers. Spinster, face like vinegar. I knew her as Aunty Osborne; she was a headmistress of a school.

Katie Not Miss Osborne, headmistress of St Winifred's?

Tarquin I believe that was the name of the school. I used to loathe having to accompany mother when she visited. If I put one foot wrong, her face would turn like thunder and purse her lips in and out like a bulldog chewing a wasp. She was quite a tartar.