

WOODEN OVERCOATS
EPISODE 4.1 – THE BODY SNATCHERS

By
David K. Barnes

RECORDING SCRIPT

Rudyard Funn ~ FELIX TRENCH
Antigone Funn ~ BETH EYRE
Eric Chapman ~ TOM CROWLEY
Georgie Crusoe ~ CIARA BAXENDALE
Madeleine ~ BELINDA LANG
Reverend Nigel Wavering ~ ANDY SECOMBE
Agatha Doyle ~ ALISON SKILBECK
Mayor Desmond Desmond ~ SEAN BAKER
Jennifer Delacroix ~ ALANA ROSS
Miss Scruple ~ ELLIE DICKENS
Tanya ~ EMILY STRIDE
Mouse ~ HOLLY CAMPBELL

PRE-TITLES.

**TINY DOOR OPENS AND SLAMS. LITTLE PAWS
RUSH UP TO THE MIC. MADELEINE SITS.**

MADELEINE: (V.O.) Well! Hello everybody. Sorry I'm late... (SETTLES
DOWN) Right... (CLEARS THROAT)

SHUFFLES TINY PAPERS.

Now... Where did we get up to...?

STORMY CLOUDS.

Hidden in the English Channel is an island called Piffing. On the island is a village, Piffing Vale. And the village has a square, and the square has a funeral home, and opposite that is *another* funeral home, and... well, you get the picture, I'm sure.

When people want a funeral and a bit of cheering up, they go to Eric Chapman. He's a truly splendid fellow, who can make your dreams come true!

Not like the twins across the square. They're so depressing and *peculiar*, and their funerals all go wrong.

And that's the way, it seems to most, that things will always be. Because nothing ever changes.

Until, of course, it does.

ROLL OF THUNDER, THEME TUNE.

ANNOUNCER: *Wooden Overcoats*, by David K. Barnes. Season Four, Episode One: *The Body Snatchers*.

SCENE 1.

CHURCHYARD. RAINING.

WAVERING: Dearly beloved, we gather here today to bid a fond farewell to Professor Bertie Oblomov, whose contribution to science will not be forgotten...

MOURNERS: 'HEAR HEAR' ETC

A man who placed himself... into suspended animation! Not with 'technology' like the usual rabble, but through sheer mental willpower! And it worked! For two minutes. And then he died. But... aren't we all standing on the shoulders of giants? I know I am.

MOURNERS, MURMURS OF AGREEMENT

MADELEINE: (V.O.) As Reverend Wavering wound up another moving tribute, he gave an airy thumbs-up in the direction of Rudyard Funn, standing ready next to the coffin.

RUDYARD: There's our signal. Heave ho, Georgie.

GEORGIE: On it.

RUDYARD: You take that end, and... yes, why not take the other one too while you're at it. My back hurts.

GEORGIE: So, I'll pick up the coffin by myself, then. Like I always do.

RUDYARD: Honing a skill! That's called an apprenticeship. By rights, you should be paying me.

GEORGIE: (SIGHS, PICKS UP COFFIN)

GEORGIE PICKS UP COFFIN

Hey. This one's lighter than I expected. I thought the Professor was a big fella?

RUDYARD: Now look, we've had our bad days, Georgie, but you can't seriously imagine we'd forget to bring the body, can you?

GEORGIE: (BEAT) I mean... Mate.

RUDYARD: Yes alright, it's plausible, but we can't check now.

WAVERING: (SLIGHT DISTANCE AWAY) Anyway, you guys have been amazing, so I'm going to hand you back to our undertaker for this morning. Rudyard?

RUDYARD: OK, Georgie, we're on. Start frowning.

KNOCK. KNOCK. FROM INSIDE COFFIN.

... What was that?

GEORGIE: Um. It sounded like someone knocking.

RUDYARD: From where?

GEORGIE: Inside the coffin.

RUDYARD: Oh, I see! (BEAT) No, wait a moment-

KNOCK. KNOCK.

GEORGIE: ... Sir. I think we've got a problem.

RUDYARD: We can't have, not now! They're all staring at us.

WAVERING: Rudyard?

RUDYARD: (CALL) Coming, Reverend! (TO GEORGIE) We've got to move this coffin-

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

GEORGIE: Sir...!

RUDYARD: Act natural.

GEORGIE: How?!

RUDYARD: Ignore it.

GEORGIE: We can't bury that.

RUDYARD: We can do anything we put our minds to, Georgie-

A HAND BURSTS THROUGH THE COFFIN LID

RUDYARD: / GEORGIE: (YELL)

MOURNERS: GASPS OF TERROR

HAND SCRABBLING AROUND THE OPENING.

WAVERING: (OFF) There's something getting out! Look!

TANYA: (OFF) That hand! That horrible hand!

RUDYARD: Everybody, keep calm! We've got this entirely under con-

OTHER HAND BURSTS THROUGH THE LID.

(YELPS)

COFFIN LID BEING TORN ASUNDER

GEORGIE: Sir, what's happening?!

RUDYARD: I don't know. But I bet we get sued for it.

WAVERING: The dead are rising!! I knew this day would come! ... Has anyone got any holy water? I drank all mine.

THE OCCUPANT SMASHING THROUGH AND
EMERGING. IT'S ANTIGONE.

ANTIGONE: (EFFORT, CRYING OUT) No! Wait! I'm not dead! Please believe me!

GEORGIE: Hang about, that's no zombie. It's-

RUDYARD: Antigone!!

ANTIGONE: Yes!! It's me! You picked up the wrong coffin!

SPLUTTERS AS SHE STANDS UP.

RUDYARD: What the Hell are you doing in there?

ANTIGONE: I fell asleep!

RUDYARD: Why?!

ANTIGONE: I was tired!!

WAVERING: Relax, everyone! False alarm! It's only the sister, not a zombie.

MOURNERS: RELIEF, CALMING

RUDYARD: I am so embarrassed.

ANTIGONE: You nearly buried me alive!

RUDYARD: Oh, it always has to be about you, hasn't it!

GEORGIE: Nigel, we're so, so sorry about this.

WAVERING: Well, it is a Funn funeral! What did we expect?

RUDYARD: / ANTIGONE: (WRETCHED SIGH)

WAVERING: But as my mother always said, if you're going to drop a clanger, at least make it a new one. Give them a hand!

WEAK ROUND OF CLAPPING. BEAT.

TANYA: But where's the body?!

WAVERING: Oh God, that's a point. Er, Rudyard?

RUDYARD: Well it's at home, obviously. It's a bit late to get it now.

WAVERING: Look, if I had to wake up and get dressed this morning, I want there to have been a damn good reason for it! So go fetch the body and let's finish this funeral! Chop chop!

RUDYARD: You can't speak to me like that! I am a professional doing a job, and I demand that you show me some respect!

WAVERING: OK Boomer.

RUDYARD: What?!

GEORGIE: Leave it, sir, let's just do as he says. Antigone, could you get out of the coffin when I'm trying to carry it?

ANTIGONE: Actually, I'm feeling very fragile from my ordeal... You shall both have to carry me.

BEAT.

RUDYARD: Tip her out.

GEORGIE: Yeah.

THEY SHARPLY TIP ANTIGONE OUT.

ANTIGONE: Aaaaaaargh!

SPLAT INTO MUD.

SCENE 2.

FUNN FUNERALS.

MADELEINE: (V.O.) The three of them sloped back to Funn Funerals to retrieve the Professor from the mortuary. The second half of the funeral eventually kicked off, but by then most of the mourners had got bored and gone home, including the Reverend. It was a crushing day for the Funns...

FRONT DOOR OPENS.

RUDYARD, ANTIGONE AND GEORGIE ENTER.

GEORGIE: What's done is done; there's no point in getting upset.

ANTIGONE: It's not as simple as that, Georgie.

DOOR CLOSES

RUDYARD: It certainly isn't. This morning, in front of the village, we failed to get the body in the coffin in the ground on time! We've lost our reputation, don't you see? Our reputation!

ANTIGONE: "I have lost the immortal part of myself, and what remains ... is bestial."

GEORGIE: (SIDE-EYE) Yeah alright – look, I'm not saying this morning wasn't a car crash, because it totally was. But it'll all blow over.

ANTIGONE: It won't.

GEORGIE: Trust me. I bet they've already forgotten.

SHE TURNS THE RADIO ON.

JENNIFER: (D) This is Jennifer Delacroix, Piffing FM. Are the dead rising from their graves and roaming the island, or is it just another Funn Funeral? We'll be running this poll for the rest of the month – so tell all your friends and keep calling! Now for some disco.

DISCO MUSIC.

GEORGIE: I'll have a word with her about it.

RUDYARD: Good, I hate disco.

RADIO OFF.

GEORGIE: No, I meant-

RUDYARD: And as for you Antigone, what were you playing at? Sleeping in a coffin? Why wasn't the body ready?

ANTIGONE: I was up all night trying to make him perfect! Twice I even started over. Drain him, fill him up, drain him, fill him up. There was barely any of him left by the time I finished.

GEORGIE: He was a little bit slushy.

ANTIGONE: But he still wasn't good enough, and I was tired and sad, so I climbed into a coffin for a few minutes rest. And once you pull the lid up, it's really quite cosy. And warm. And safe... Damn it, I wish that you had buried me!

RUDYARD: We'll put you back if you like!

GEORGIE: Guys!! Guys. Come on. Don't go off the deep end. We've been through worse, haven't we?

ANTIGONE: I'm sick of going through worse!

RUDYARD: So am I. Everything we do ends in failure. I don't mind telling you, I'm reaching the end of my tether. In fact, as of today, I've reached it. I've had enough. I quit!

ANTIGONE: What?!

RUDYARD: You heard me, I quit! I'm quitting the business!

GEORGIE: You can't do that!

RUDYARD: I'm the boss, I can do what I like – and I quit! If you have any complaints, take them up with Antigone.

ANTIGONE: Oh no you don't! You think you can just walk away from your responsibilities, do you? Is that what you think?

RUDYARD: Yes.

ANTIGONE: Well you're not the only one. I quit too.

GEORGIE: Antigone!

ANTIGONE: I'm free! Free, at last! Think of all the things that I can do I couldn't do before! I can stay inside all day whenever I want!

GEORGIE: Great, now I'm in charge of the business, am I?

RUDYARD: No, by the terms of the company, it falls to Madeleine.

MOUSE: (SQUEAK)

RUDYARD: Say hello to your new boss, Georgie.

GEORGIE: OK, look, nobody's quitting. I know we're having a rough day. But just tell yourself this – this, right here, is as bad as it's ever going to get.

FRONT DOOR OPENS, ERIC ENTERS

ERIC: Hello everyone!

GEORGIE: Urgh.

DOOR CLOSSES. RESENTFUL ATMOSPHERE.

ERIC: Rudyard!

BEAT.

Antigone.

BEAT.

Georgie?

BEAT.

... Madeleine?

MOUSE: (BRIGHT SQUEAKS!)

ERIC: (RELIEVED) Oh, thanks, not bad, how's about yourself?

MOUSE: (SQUEAK 'CAN'T COMPLAIN')

RUDYARD: Enough of that. ... So, Chapman? Swooping in for the kill, eh? Kicking us while we're down? Is that what brings you here, on this particular morning?

ERIC: No. Actually, I er...

RUDYARD: Yes?

ERIC: Well, er... as it happens... I came here to ask for help.

ANTIGONE: Help?

GEORGIE: You?

ERIC: You see, um... The thing is... I've made a mistake.

RUDYARD: (BEAT) A mistake? Really?

ERIC: Yes.

RUDYARD: ... Huh. (BEAT) Wait there.

RUDYARD, ANTIGONE AND GEORGIE HAVE A
VERY QUICK HUDDLE

So, regards the chat about quitting-

ANTIGONE: Forget it?

RUDYARD: Yep.

GEORGIE: Done.

RUDYARD: Great.

GEORGIE: Let's never fight again.

HUDDLE QUICKLY BREAKS.

RUDYARD: OK Chapman! Go ahead! We're all ears, aren't we?

GEORGIE: Wouldn't miss it.

ANTIGONE: (EXCITED) Yesss.

ERIC: Right... Well, for obvious reasons, I don't want this matter getting out. (HUSHED) What I'm about to tell you must be kept under the very strictest secrecy-

RUDYARD: (LOUDLY) What?

ERIC: (SLIGHTLY LESS HUSHED) ... I said, what I'm about to say is top secret and you must keep it under-

RUDYARD: (LOUDLY) What? Can't hear you.

ERIC: Could you just-

RUDYARD: (LOUDLY) Secret what?

ERIC: Shhh shh shhh!

FRONT DOOR BURSTS OPEN

WAVERING: (EAGER) Does someone have a secret?

ERIC: Nope nope, nothing!

WAVERING: (SNAPS FINGERS) Rats.

EXITS, DOOR CLOSSES.

GEORGIE: Spit it out, Eric. We're not gonna grass on you.

ERIC: Fine, the simple matter is that I've... lost something, of great sentimental value. And I need to get it back. It's a... a sort of identity bracelet, I suppose you'd call it.

ANTIGONE: An identity bracelet?

GEORGIE: (SMIRK) What, in case you forget who you are?

ERIC: Yes, you might say that. (DISTANCE) Yes... In a way...

RUDYARD SNAPPING FINGERS

RUDYARD: Not getting any younger...

ERIC: Sorry.

ANTIGONE: Get to the bit where you make a mistake.

ERIC: Sure thing. I was wearing it when preparing a few bodies last Wednesday. Three of them in one afternoon. It was a slow day.

RUDYARD: (SIGHS)

/ ANTIGONE: (MUTTERING)

/ GEORGIE: Oh come on.

ERIC: It was only a while after I'd finished and got them in their coffins that I realised the bracelet was missing from my wrist. It's nowhere in the workshop, which means...

ANTIGONE: It's fallen into one of those three coffins?

ERIC: Must have done. But I was too slow – those funerals have been and gone, and the coffins are buried.

RUDYARD: Then you'll have to go and dig them up, won't you?

ERIC: Correct. (BEAT) That's why I need your help.

ANTIGONE: Why? You could do it yourself.

ERIC: Not all in one night I couldn't. I'll have to wait till after dark so no one can see me, but the more nights it takes then the greater the risk of exposure.

GEORGIE: Why not tell the Reverend you messed up?

ERIC: Exhuming bodies because of a blunder I made? I'm not sure he'd be too happy. It's best that nobody knows.

ANTIGONE: You mean your pride won't allow it.

GEORGIE: Mr Perfect got it wrong.

ERIC: Yes alright. The point is – are you lot willing to help me?

ANTIGONE: Hmm...

ERIC: It wouldn't be hard. They're all buried in the cemetery. If we split up, we could tackle all three of them by sun-up.

RUDYARD: Hold on there, Chapman. Our co-operation doesn't come cheap. What do we get out of it?

ERIC: Name your price.

RUDYARD: (INHALES TO SPEAK)

ERIC: I'm not leaving the island.

RUDYARD: (EXHALES, DEFLATED) I see.

ANTIGONE: How about this... You agree to stop work for, say, a fortnight? An extended holiday, if you will.

ERIC: Two weeks? That's outrageous!

ANTIGONE: Not if you really want that bracelet back, Chapman.

ERIC: I'm sorry, you'll have to lower your price.

ANTIGONE: That's as low as it goes. And bear in mind, now we know all about this, it might just leak to the outside world...

ERIC: You wouldn't.

ANTIGONE: Perhaps I wouldn't...

RUDYARD: ... But I would. (BEAT, THEN LOUD) Secret!

FRONT DOOR BURSTS OPEN.

WAVERING: Definitely heard it that time!

ERIC: OK OK OK! You've got yourself a deal.

ANTIGONE: Very wise. Sorry, Reverend.

WAVERING: (GRUMBLING) Got to fill my next book with something...

HE EXITS, DOOR CLOSSES.

ERIC: Right then. I'll meet you all outside the churchyard tonight at twenty-three hundred hours. Dress in black, bring your best shovels, and, most importantly...

DOOR OPEN.

(SERIOUS) Enjoy yourselves.

HE EXITS, DOOR CLOSSES.

GEORGIE: Wow. Antigone, you were ruthless.

ANTIGONE: (COOL) Yes, I was, wasn't I? I suppose in business one must develop one's 'killer instinct.'

RUDYARD: Two weeks without Chapman! We'll have the monopoly on funerals in Piffing Vale, just like the old days!

ANTIGONE: We can't count our chickens yet. We've got to find this bracelet first. I wonder why it's so important to him...

RUDYARD: He's probably making a fuss about nothing. That man's ego could block out the moon. He's so vain he probably thinks this rant is about him.

GEORGIE: It is.

RUDYARD: Yes, but he doesn't know that.

ANTIGONE: We should ready ourselves. We've a long and arduous
job ahead of us... Digging up bodies, at the dead of night.
What would our parents have thought?

RUDYARD: They'd just be glad you were leaving the house.

SCENE 3.

CHURCHYARD ENTRANCE. NIGHT. CRICKETS.

MADELEINE: (V.O.) The day went by, the sun went down, and a few hours later the four of us crept quietly along the streets of Piffing Vale to join Eric Chapman outside the cemetery. The night was still, calm, and silent...

GEORGIE: (LOUD) Oi, Eric!

ERIC: Shhhhh!!!!

GEORGIE: Hahaha.

RUDYARD: Georgie.

GEORGIE: I just wanted to scare him.

ANTIGONE: And we all enjoyed it, but let's stay focussed. We're here, Chapman, shall we get started?

ERIC: Wait, this is a covert operation. You're all still in uniform?

ANTIGONE: You said wear black.

RUDYARD: Not everyone wears beige to a funeral, Chapman.

ERIC: Yes, alright. I brought spare balaclavas just in case, so do shout if you need one.

GEORGIE: (SHOUTS) OK!

ERIC: Shhhhhhh!!

GEORGIE: Hahaha.

RUDYARD: So, we've got three coffins to dig up and search. How do you propose we go about it?

ERIC: We split in pairs. You and Georgie take one, Antigone and I take another, and if we've not already found the bracelet, we'll all meet up for the third. OK?

ANTIGONE: Hold on, why me and you?

ERIC: Rudyard's a nightmare, and Georgie doesn't like me.

GEORGIE: Fair.

ERIC: So I figured you probably hated me the least.

ANTIGONE: Hmm. I see.

RUDYARD: (HUSHED) Georgie, I think Antigone's a traitor.

ANTIGONE: Shut up Rudyard. Anything else?

ERIC PUTS DOWN SOME RUCKSACKS.

ERIC: Here. I've prepared you each a pack for the mission. You've got torches, maps, and emergency rations. But if anything goes wrong, we don't know each other.

RUDYARD: And yet we obviously do.

ERIC: ... Sorry, yes, old habits. Er, forget that last part.

GEORGIE: Why've you given us passports?

ERIC: Yeah, I want those back.

TAKES BACK PASSPORTS UNDER:

But otherwise, I think we're ready. Best of luck, and don't be a hero.

RUDYARD: Don't worry, I won't.

ERIC: Antigone, shall we?

ANTIGONE: Yes, let's get it over with. See you both later.

ERIC: Enjoy yourselves.

ERIC AND ANTIGONE WALK OFF.

RUDYARD: (WORRIED) Georgie... I have an unnerving suspicion that Chapman wants to offer Antigone a contract and poach her from Funn Funerals.

GEORGIE: Nah, he tried that years ago.

RUDYARD: Did it work?

GEORGIE: No.

RUDYARD: Never mind then – where's our coffin?

GEORGIE: The map says... this way...

THEY MOVE OFF, UNDER GATHERING STORM
CLOUDS.

GEORGIE: I've been looking forward to this, really. It's quite exciting.

RUDYARD: Speak for yourself. It's long past my bedtime.

GEORGIE: When's that?

RUDYARD: Six. Same as everyone else's.

SCENE 4.

GRAVEYARD. STORMY WEATHER BREWIING.

MADELEINE: (V.O.) Antigone and Eric had reached the first grave on the list: a local librarian who'd been flattened by the complete works of Barbara Cartland. Stormy clouds gathered as they set to work on their ghoulish enterprise.

SHOVEL IN DIRT, ERIC DIGGING.

ERIC: Antigone? What are you waiting for? I thought you were going to help.

ANTIGONE: I can't, Chapman, it just feels wrong! Digging up a coffin was so much more excusable in the abstract. But now that I'm here, with a shovel in hand...

ERIC: Antigone, please.

ANTIGONE: I'm sorry, no! This whole task is wretched and degrading – I'll just sit and watch you do it.

ERIC: (ANNOYED SIGH) Could you at least hold the torch so I can see what I'm doing?

ANTIGONE: But the vicarage is only over there; somebody could see us!

ERIC: And the longer we hang around, the more likely that becomes! The torch, please!

ANTIGONE: Alright, alright...

ERIC: Thank you!

ERIC CONTINUES DIGGING.

ANTIGONE: It's ridiculous, anyway! Going to these lengths. There's nothing stopping you from asking the village for help. They know you're not perfect.

ERIC STOPS.

ERIC: What? Who told them? Was it Rudyard?

ANTIGONE: No! It's human nature, Chapman. Nobody's perfect!

ERIC CONTINUES DIGGING.

ERIC: I never said I was. I've had my share of slipups in the past.

ANTIGONE: 'A long time ago', yes, we're aware.

ERIC: And anyway, I'm not the only one of us who has trouble asking for help, eh Antigone?

ANTIGONE: Rubbish, I've got no issues there!

ERIC: I've three words to say to that. Forty dead clowns.

ANTIGONE: Oh, as if I'm the first person that's happened to!

ERIC: We all cock things up occasionally, but there's one thing I never, ever get wrong – and that is a funeral.

ANTIGONE: Professional pride?

ERIC: Not quite. At least, not the whole story. But it'll do for now.

ANTIGONE: There you go again! International man of mystery, Eric Chapman. He can do anything except have a normal conversation.

ERIC: It's simply that I happen to think that funerals are too important to make mistakes. (BEAT) No offence.

ANTIGONE: (GASPS) What do you mean?

ERIC: You know what I mean! You burst out of a coffin this morning at somebody else's funeral!

ANTIGONE: How dare you bring it up! If you were any kind of friend-

ERIC: Well I'm not, I'm just a competitor. Remember? I admit, I never learnt the traditional method of losing a body or starting a riot, but I think my innovative way of not doing those things is keeping me happily employed so far.

ANTIGONE: I don't have to stand here and be insulted!

ERIC: No, you could help with the digging instead. You blackmailed me earlier on, but I'm not seeing much bang for my buck.

ANTIGONE MARCHES FORWARD.

ANTIGONE: Right, give me that!

ERIC: What-

ANTIGONE SNATCHES THE SHOVEL, AND
DIGS INCREDIBLY QUICKLY.

ANTIGONE: (SEVEN IDENTICAL NOISES OF EFFORT)

SHOVEL HITS WOOD WITH A CLUNK.

There we are. Done. (BEAT) You were taking ages.

ERIC: Um... wow.

ANTIGONE: What?

ERIC: The way you did that was... quite something.

ANTIGONE: Stop gaping, Chapman, and get into that coffin so you can find what we came for!

ERIC: Oh, yep, sure!

THUNDERCLAP (LIGHTNING).

Wait.

ANTIGONE: What is it?

ERIC: The vicarage, look... The lights came on.

ANTIGONE: ... Maybe they've seen us!

ERIC: We can't abandon the operation on a 'maybe'... Tell you what, you go and check it out, and I'll finish up here.

ANTIGONE: Me?! Why not you? I'll get caught!

ERIC: Stick to the shadows, you love doing that! Find out if we've been rumbled. We need to know how long we've got!

ANTIGONE: For God's sake. Fine! Wish me luck...

SHE SCURRIES OFF, UNDER ANOTHER THUNDERCLAP. IT STARTS TO RAIN.

MADELEINE: (V.O.) As the rain began, and the odd flash of lightning lit the sky, Antigone legged it towards the vicarage – where Nigel and Desmond were up later than usual...

SCENE 5.

VICARAGE. RAINING OUTSIDE.

MAYOR: It's hopeless, Nigel, I can't sleep a wink! I knew we shouldn't have watched that scary film. All those frightening ghosts and ghouls!

WAVERING: Dezy, it was *The Muppet Christmas Carol*.

MAYOR: The little green man will haunt my dreams.

WAVERING: (SOOTHING) Alright, why don't you sit down and calm yourself, and I'll make you a mug of cocoa, OK?

MAYOR: Thank you, Nigel.

WAVERING: You're an absolute menace.

HE KISSES DESMOND, AND EXITS.

(CALLING BACK) And make sure you relax!

QUIET ROLL OF THUNDER

MAYOR: I could look out of the window. That's always pleasant.
(BEAT) Hmm... How peculiar... (CALLS) Nigel?

WAVERING: (OFF, CALL) In a minute!

MAYOR: (TO SELF) I could have sworn... that there was someone... outside... at the window...

LOUD THUNDERCLAP / LIGHTNING.

ANTIGONE: (OUTSIDE) Aaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhh-

MAYOR: Aaaaaaaahhhhhhh!!!!

ANTIGONE: (OUTSIDE) -aaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhh!!!!

MAYOR: Bloody Hell!!

WAVERING COMES RUNNING BACK

WAVERING: Dezy! Dezy, what's wrong, what is it?

MAYOR: Out there! At the window! A horrible phantom!

WAVERING: There's nothing there now – are you sure?

MAYOR: It was terrifying! Like the Muppet man!

WAVERING: I can't see any spectres... but someone's out there. See, it's a torchlight... (GASP) It must be body snatchers!

MAYOR: Body snatchers! In my village? The swine!

WAVERING: Hand me the telephone. I'm calling Agatha Doyle.

MAYOR: I doubt she'd deliver chocolates at this hour.

WAVERING: I meant the police.

MAYOR: Oh, yes.

WAVERING BEGINS DIALLING.

SCENE 6.

CHURCHYARD. RAINING. ERIC SEARCHING
AN OCCUPIED COFFIN.

ERIC: Come on, come on, where is it...?

ANTIGONE RUNNING THROUGH MUD.

ANTIGONE: (CALLING) Danger! Danger! Chapman!

ERIC: Antigone?

ANTIGONE: They saw me! They're on their way!

ERIC: But the shadows protect you!

ANTIGONE: I was betrayed!

ERIC: Damn! Did they recognise you? It's dark, it's raining-

ANTIGONE: I don't know! I didn't stay to find out!

ERIC: Then we may still have a chance, but we'll have to be quick. Help me put the lid back on.

ANTIGONE: Did you find the bracelet?

ERIC: It's not here.

THEY HEAVE THE LID BACK INTO PLACE.

ERIC: / ANTIGONE: (HEAVE)

ANTIGONE: Aren't we going to bury it again?

ERIC: No, we've got to keep moving to the third coffin! I hope
Rudyard and Georgie had better luck than we did!

ERIC AND ANTIGONE RUN AWAY.

MADELEINE: (V.O.) As the two of them scrambled desperately across
the muddy earth, Reverend Wavering sought help from
the redoubtable Agatha Doyle...

SCENE 7.

THE BROKEN TOOTH.

AGATHA: What's that, Reverend? Body snatchers in the dead of night? That does sound exciting! I shall ask my housekeeper to lay out my detecting trousers forthwith!
(CALLS) Miss Scruple!

MISS SCRUPLE: (OFF) I'm pressing them now, dear!

AGATHA: So efficient! (ON PHONE) Never fear, Reverend. I'll be there in a jiffy. I may be retired, but I know what to do with miscreants like these: give them a ruddy good telling off!

SCENE 8.

VICARAGE. RAINING OUTSIDE.

AGATHA: (D) Stay indoors and remain calm.

WAVERING: Thank you, Ms Doyle!

RECEIVER DOWN.

She's on her way to nab those wicked rascals.

MAYOR: I trust that she'll give them a ruddy good telling off?

WAVERING: If anyone can, it's her! Those naughty tomb raiders had better watch out! Agatha Doyle is on the case!

DRAMATIC STING

SCENE 9.

**LAKE CHAPMAN. RAIN EASING OFF. GEORGIE
ROWING A SMALL BOAT WITH RUDYARD IN IT.**

MADELEINE: (V.O.) Unaware of the trouble that lay ahead, Rudyard, Georgie and I were travelling in a small boat to the middle of Lake Chapman – a body of water that Eric discovered on his first day in Piffling Vale. The rain was easing off, so I climbed out of Rudyard’s pocket to observe events.

GEORGIE: (ROWING, TIRED) Sir. Do you want to row for a bit?

RUDYARD: Not while I’m navigating, Georgie!

GEORGIE: OK, where are we?

RUDYARD: Haven’t a clue!

MOUSE: (SQUEAK SQUEAK)

RUDYARD: Thank you, Madeleine.

RUSTLE OF MAP

According to the map, the coffin should be around here somewhere, but I don’t see it.

GEORGIE: It’s underwater, obviously.

RUDYARD: How on Earth do we get to it, then?

GEORGIE: Look inside the packs he gave us.

RUDYARD CHECKS THE RUCKSACKS WHILE
GEORGIE STOPS ROWING.

RUDYARD: I can't see how that can possibly... oh this is absurd...

GEORGIE: What's he put in there?

RUDYARD PULLS OUT...

RUDYARD: Grappling hooks and fishing rods.

GEORGIE: Yeah, that'll do it. If X marks the spot, let's give it a try.
(CASTS A LINE) You ever been fishing before?

SHE CASTS A LINE. HOOK SPLASHES IN
WATER AND SINKS. FISHING LINE UNSPOOLS.

RUDYARD: Only the once. Wasn't my sort of thing.

GEORGIE: Why not?

RUDYARD: Our father used me as bait.

GEORGIE: Ah.

RUDYARD: All I caught was an old boot. It wasn't even my size.

GEORGIE: Well, maybe we'll do better tonight, eh.

PEACEFUL CALM. QUIET CRICKETS.

By the way sir...

RUDYARD: Yes?

- GEORGIE: You're not really quitting Funn Funerals, are you?
- RUDYARD: No... We've been here since the 15th century; I'm not letting it end on my watch. And since I've begun delving into the history of this village, I've gained a keener appreciation of my roots.
- GEORGIE: Oh yeah, the Mayor gave you that archive project. Assembling the complete chronicle of Piffing Vale.
- RUDYARD: Yes, it's long and painstaking work, Georgie. Sifting through photographs, documents, old books, tapestries... It's taken up all my spare hours for months and months.
- GEORGIE: Found anything interesting?
- RUDYARD: No. But it's early days yet, and I'm honoured to be doing my bit for the village. Besides burying their dead.
- GEORGIE: That's the spirit, sir. Maybe I can get Jennifer to interview you about it on Piffing FM?
- RUDYARD: I thought she didn't like me?
- GEORGIE: Yeah, not your biggest fan – but she loves community content.
- RUDYARD: Hmm. You're quite close these days, aren't you?
- GEORGIE: (SMILE) Yeah, you could say that.
- RUDYARD: So if you asked her to advertise Funn Funerals-

GEORGIE: That's corruption. I can't ask for favours like that.

RUDYARD: Then I can't see any benefit to your relationship at all!

GEORGIE: And that's the way it's gonna stay! The world doesn't revolve around you!

RUDYARD: I find that hard to believe.

FISHING WIRE STRAINS

GEORGIE: Hey! I think we've found something!

STARTS REELING IT IN.

(EFFORT) Whatever we're snagged on, it's heavy!

RUDYARD: Is it the coffin?

GEORGIE: Must be!

RUDYARD: Then reel it in, quickly! Before it gets away!

GEORGIE: I'm trying!! (EFFORT NOISE)

RESISTANCE. TRYING TO REEL IT IN.

It's so heavy... (EFFORT) If I'm not very careful, I'll...
I'll... Waaaarghhh!!

GEORGIE IS PULLED IN AND GOES UNDER

RUDYARD: (NOT UNDULY WORRIED) Georgie!... Georgie?...

CALM NIGHT AGAIN.

RUDYARD: (SIGHS) ... Georgie, we haven't got all night!

GEORGIE BREAKS THE SURFACE WITH THE
FLOATING COFFIN.

GEORGIE: (DEEP BREATHS)

RUDYARD: Ah, there you are. Got the coffin?

GEORGIE: Yeah.

RUDYARD: Great, float it over here, and we'll take a peek.

GEORGIE: Can I get in the boat please?

RUDYARD: In a minute! Stop fussing! Now then, what have we got?

THEY OPEN THE LID, SPLASH.

Ah yes, it's old Mrs Cousteau. She died doing what she liked most.

GEORGIE: Which was?

RUDYARD: Evading income tax. (SEARCHING) ... No, there isn't any sign of this bracelet Chapman's on about.

GEORGIE: Are you sure?

RUDYARD: I've checked as thoroughly as I care to; it's not here.

GEORGIE: Then stick the lid back on again so we can-

AGATHA: (OFF) I say! I say, you there! Who are you and what the blazes do you think you're doing with that coffin?

GEORGIE: Oh flip! It's Agatha Doyle!

RUDYARD: We can't let her catch us! She'd never sell us sweets ever again! Quick, whack the lid back on and sink the coffin!

GEORGIE: Then what?

RUDYARD: We get away as fast as we can! (JUMPS)

RUDYARD JUMPS IN. SPLASH.

GEORGIE: Sir!!

RUDYARD: (SWIMMING) Last one to the shore gets arrested!

SWIMMING AWAY UNDER...

MADELEINE: (V.O.) While Georgie remembered that Rudyard couldn't swim, and that she'd probably have to save his life again, Antigone and Eric had reached the third and final coffin...

SCENE 10.

A MAUSOLEUM. SLIGHTLY ECHOEY.

MADELEINE: (V.O.) ... It was housed with many others inside an old mausoleum, of sombre aspect: the MacGregor family vault...

ERIC: Here we are... Mackenzie MacGregor. Ninety-five years. Died in his sleep, on a skiing holiday. He dozed off and hit a tree halfway down the slopes... Oh damn.

ANTIGONE: What's wrong?

ERIC RATTLES PADLOCK.

ERIC: This one's locked. I forgot about that.

ANTIGONE: You must have a key?

ERIC: Back in my workshop, and it's too late to fetch it. Looks like I'm going to have to pick the lock open.

HE KNEELS.

(KNEELS) Trouble is, this particular type of lock is made to be virtually impregnable. And I should know.

ANTIGONE: Why?

ERIC: I designed it myself. Got a hairpin?

ANTIGONE: No.

ERIC: Don't worry, I have.

HE BEGINS PICKING LOCK.

It's amazing isn't it, this place? Nine generations of MacGregors have been laid to rest here, each after a lifetime's loyal and dedicated service to Piffling Vale, working in the family trade. Nine generations of fully qualified train drivers.

ANTIGONE: It's a pity we've never had a railway... Of course, I was already aware of that information, about the family.

ERIC: Were you?

ANTIGONE: Yes.

ERIC: How's that?

ANTIGONE: Because when it comes to late members of the clan MacGregor, you may have entombed the most recent one, but my family did all the rest of them.

ERIC STOPS LOCKPICKING.

ERIC: ... Ah.

ANTIGONE: Take a look around, Chapman. Wherever you see a coffin, it was put there by a Funn. (BEAT) We've been here quite a while, if you remember.

ERIC: Yes. (BEAT) Sorry.

ERIC CONTINUES LOCKPICKING.

ANTIGONE: It's been years since I last set foot in this mausoleum.

ERIC: Did you work on any of them yourself?

ANTIGONE: No. But my mother did. When I was a child, I watched her embalming the last one, MacGregor Snr. He'd been a tough and unpleasant man in life, but in death she made him look angelic. And she told me to study what she did very closely. Because while she was preparing the father, she said, one day I'd do the same for his son.

ERIC: (UNSURE) And how did that make you feel?

ANTIGONE: Back then? (BEAT) Like I was part of something. (BEAT) I didn't know he'd even died until tonight.

ERIC STOPS LOCKPICKING.

ERIC: I'm sorry.

ANTIGONE: (SHRUGS) They wanted you for this funeral. You couldn't turn them down. To be honest, being here simply reminds me how far our standards have dropped...

ERIC: If I'd realised, I'd have put his family off, or come up with an excuse, or... (SIGHS) We're competitors, I get that, but I'd really like to think we can still be friends.

ANTIGONE: I know you would, despite everything. (BEAT) Your problem, Chapman, is you're so desperate to be liked.

ERIC: (SCOFFING LAUGH) You really think that's true?

ANTIGONE: We wouldn't be here tonight if it wasn't. (BEAT) Are you going to pick that lock, or are we giving up?

ERIC: I never give up.

ANTIGONE: Is that a fact?

ERIC: No. More something I tell myself, really.

HE GOES BACK TO LOCKPICKING, WHEN
RUNNING FOOTSTEPS APPROACH.

I think we've got company.

RUDYARD AND GEORGIE BURST IN.

RUDYARD: Antigone! Chapman.

GEORGIE: Sorry we're late. We got side-tracked, eh Madeleine?

MOUSE: (SQUEAK)

ANTIGONE: You're all soaked! Surely it wasn't raining that much!

GEORGIE: No but the lake is full of water. Look, Agatha Doyle's on the war path. She could be here at any minute.

ERIC: Nigel and Des must have called her in. Did you find the bracelet?

RUDYARD: No, did you?

ERIC: Afraid not. So it's got to be in this one.

ANTIGONE: Yes, and unfortunately we can't pick the lock open.

GEORGIE: Is that all? Here, let me have a go. (BEAT) Done it.

LOCK BURSTS OPEN.

ERIC: Well, that was inevitable – right, let's take a look.

RAISES THE LID, IT FALLS. ECHOES.

Sorry Mackenzie.

RUDYARD: Hurry up, man! Get searching!

ERIC: Hey, you don't need to push!

RUDYARD: It's the only way you'll learn!

AGATHA: (OUTSIDE, CALLS) I say! ... Hello in there!

GEORGIE: (HUSH) She's found us!

AGATHA: (OFF) This is Agatha Doyle speaking! Vacate that mausoleum with your hands where I can see 'em.

RUDYARD: What do you think she'll do?

ERIC: I reckon she'll give us a ruddy good telling off.

GEORGIE: I don't think I could stand that.

ERIC: No, nor could I... I suppose that's it then. Game over. This fiasco will get out after all.

ANTIGONE: Not necessarily... You want to keep it a secret, don't you? How much is it worth to you?

ERIC: What's your price?

ANTIGONE: No funerals – for a month.

ERIC: A MONTH?!

ANTIGONE: / RUDYARD: / GEORGIE: Shhhhh shhhh!

ERIC: Bloody Hell...

AGATHA: (OFF) Don't make this worse for yourselves! I'm already ticked off as it is!

ERIC: OK, you're on – but you'd better know what you're doing.

ANTIGONE: Let's find out, shall we?

THEY ALL START TO EXIT.

SCENE 11.

OUTSIDE MAUSOLEUM, GRAVEYARD. NIGHT
SOUNDS. CLEAR SKIES. THE FOUR EXITING.

AGATHA: That's it, nice and slowly. Don't give me any trouble. I've got a water pistol, so I'm quite able to defend myself.

RUDYARD: You don't scare us, Doyle!

SQUIRTED WITH WATER.

Blargh!

AGATHA: Didn't like that, did you?

RUDYARD: No!

AGATHA: Well then. Behave. Now, step into the torchlight so I can see you... Bless my soul! Mr Funn, is that you?

RUDYARD: Yes, but you can't prove it!

ANTIGONE: Rudyard.

AGATHA: Miss Funn? Miss Crusoe? Mr Chapman?! What in the name of St. Beryl's biceps are you doing here together?

ERIC: You see, Ms Doyle, er -

AGATHA: Don't you realise you've been giving people the most dreadful fright! Lurking around a cemetery, digging up coffins – and not even putting them back! It's disgraceful!

GEORGIE: Please stop telling us off!

AGATHA: I will not! And I'm especially disappointed in you, Mr Chapman. I cannot think what possessed you to involve yourself in such macabre goings on! (BEAT) Unless...

ERIC: ... Yes?

AGATHA: Of course! It's so simple! I see it all! You must have been dragged into this by Funn Funerals!

RUDYARD: / GEORGIE: What?!

AGATHA: Don't try to deny it! You were up to some mischief, Mr Chapman came here to prevent it, and instead you forced him into helping you! Is there no end to your iniquity?

RUDYARD: Now look here!

GEORGIE: That's absolute rubbish!

ANTIGONE: It's true, every word of it's true!

RUDYARD: / GEORGIE: / ERIC: What?!

ANTIGONE: You see, we lost something valuable in one of the coffins, and we've been digging them up trying to find it!

RUDYARD: But but but but-

ANTIGONE: Chapman came here to stop us, like you said, and we were debating what to do when you appeared.

GEORGIE: Antigone, have you lost your mind-?

AGATHA: Mr Chapman! Do you concur with Miss Funn's credible version of events?

ERIC: Er, well. Uh...

AGATHA: Modest to the last, I see! (CHUCKLES) That's our Eric Chapman alright! What a relief!

WAVERING: (OFF, CALL) Is anything the matter, Ms Doyle? Have you caught the body snatchers?

AGATHA: (CALL) All clear, Reverend! It was only the Funns!

WAVERING: (OFF, CALL) Oh, that makes so much sense!

AGATHA: (CALL) I know!

WAVERING: (OFF, CALL) Carry on then!

RUDYARD: This is outrageous-

GEORGIE: I want a lawyer!

AGATHA: Be quiet and listen to me! Unless Mr Chapman wants to press charges-?

ERIC: Ah, no.

AGATHA: Then I'm content to let you all off with a warning. But don't let me catch you grave robbing again, or I will be most annoyed with you. Are we all agreed?

RUDYARD: / GEORGIE: No!

ANTIGONE: Yes.

AGATHA: Then I expect you to clear this all up first thing tomorrow morning. As it is, I'm going home to my bed, and I advise you to do the same!

GEORGIE: ... To your bed?

AGATHA: What? No! I'm far too tired for that sort of caper. Be off with you. Goodnight.

ERIC: / ANTIGONE: 'Night, Ms Doyle.

AGATHA WALKS OFF.

RUDYARD: Well! Now this ordeal is behind us, perhaps Antigone you'd care to tell us what the Hell that was all about?!

GEORGIE: You totally threw us under the bus, and for what?

ANTIGONE: A month in which Chapman doesn't do any funerals, and we get them all instead. It's the best night's work we've had in a long time.

RUDYARD: But Antigone, our reputation-!

ANTIGONE: - Is already so low that none of this will have made any difference. We had nothing to lose...

GEORGIE: (GETTING IT) Yeah... Unlike Mr Perfect over here.

ERIC: I see. I've been played.

ANTIGONE: You played yourself, Chapman. You could have explained everything, owned up to a mild fault. Nobody in the village would have thought any less of you.

ERIC: It's like I said: funerals are too important to get wrong.

RUDYARD: Pffft. Amateur.

MADELEINE SCAMPERS OVER, DRAGGING
IDENTITY BRACELET.

MOUSE: (SQUEAK SQUEAK)

GEORGIE: Madeleine...? Hey, she found the bracelet! It must have been in that third one after all.

MOUSE: (SQUEAKS TO ERIC: 'THERE!')

MADELEINE DROPS BRACELET, ERIC TAKES
IT.

ERIC: Thanks Madeleine! I can't tell you how glad I am to have this back again!

RUDYARD: All of this hullabaloo, for that? It doesn't look valuable.

ERIC: It is and it isn't. Sentimental reasons.

SLIPS IT INTO HIS POCKET.

Well. Madeleine, Georgie, Rudyard... Antigone.

ANTIGONE: Chapman.

ERIC: It was a pleasure to work with you all...

RUDYARD: It won't happen again.

ANTIGONE: I hope the upcoming month of grinding inactivity won't be too painful for you!

ERIC: Oh, it'll fly by, I expect! As a matter of fact, I was thinking of taking some time off work anyway.

ANTIGONE: ... What?

ERIC: You see the more I've expanded into all those side ventures, like the wine bar and the bowling alley-

GEORGIE: And the monorail-

RUDYARD: And the book nook-

ERIC: All those things and more besides... well, they split my attention from what I came here to do in the first place!

ANTIGONE: Which is?

ERIC: ... Funerals.

GEORGIE: You don't mean-?

ERIC: I decided I ought to streamline the business, close down a few wings. Stop trying to be all things to all people.

RUDYARD: Which means... you're going to put all your efforts...

ERIC: Exclusively into funerals! That's right!

GEORGIE: Oh God.

ERIC: I'll spend the month winding things down, clearing the decks, and then when it's over, I'll be ready to put the fun in funerals. Without distraction.

ANTIGONE: So... even when we were negotiating... you were planning on doing this no matter what?!

ERIC: I may have brought my plans forward just a little.

GEORGIE: We spent a whole night in this stupid cemetery-

RUDYARD: And got wet!

GEORGIE: - and got wet, only for you to turn around and say we shouldn't have bothered because there wasn't any point?

ERIC: There certainly was a point. I got my bracelet back! Enjoy yourselves!

ERIC BEGINS TO MOVE OFF.

ANTIGONE: Chapman!

ERIC STOPS, TURNS.

ERIC: Yes?

ANTIGONE: You win... this round.

ERIC: (SMILE) I'm looking forward to the next one. G'night.

HE CARRIES ON.

GEORGIE: I cannot believe he's done this to us.

RUDYARD: That sneaky, crooked, underhanded... rascalion!

GEORGIE: (SHOCKED) Sir, no!

RUDYARD: Too late, I've said it! I've tried to keep my opinions to myself, but that man has pushed us too far!

GEORGIE: And then some.

RUDYARD: Well tonight I say: no further! It's time for action!

GEORGIE: We've got to get mad!

RUDYARD: I'm a human being, damn it! My life has value!

ANTIGONE: We're not beaten yet. He'll be laughing on the other side of his face when we're through with him, I'll see to that.

RUDYARD: We'll show Eric Chapman what a funeral parlour can do!
And Funn Funerals will be number one like it always was!

GEORGIE: Yes! (BEAT) How?

RUDYARD: ... Er... Well... Madeleine?

MOUSE: (SQUEAK: 'I DUNNO')

STORMY CLOUDS GATHER

MADELEINE: (V.O.) Determined to win – but with no plan to speak of – we made our journey home, trusting that inspiration would strike, at some point, probably.

Oh, and there was the matter of that identity bracelet that yours truly recovered from the third coffin... It was a very curious item indeed. For you see, I happened to glance at it before passing it on... and the name inscribed upon it was not 'Eric Chapman.'

So, one might ask: what did it say instead?

Well. I think I'll keep that to myself for the time being.

After all, these are my Memoirs of a Funeral House Mouse – and a good author knows when to leave her audience in suspense...!

CLOSING THEME

ANNOUNCER: *The Body Snatchers* was written by David K. Barnes and performed by Felix Trench as Rudyard, Beth Eyre as Antigone, Tom Crowley as Eric, Ciara Baxendale as Georgie, Andy Secombe as Reverend Wavering, Alison Skilbeck as Agatha Doyle, Sean Baker as the Mayor, Alana Ross as Jennifer Delacroix, Ellie Dickens as Miss Scruple, Emily Stride as Tanya, and Belinda Lang as Madeleine, with mouse squeaking by Holly Campbell. The production manager was Elizabeth Campbell, and the music was composed by James Whittle. The programme was recorded at The Octagon, Brixton, and was directed and produced by Andy Goddard and John Wakefield.